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LIFE'S DARK PROBLEMS



LIFE'S DARK PROBLEMS

OR

IS THIS A GOOD WORLD?

BY

MINOT J. SAVAGE, D.D.

AUTHOR OF "LIFE BEYOND DEATH," "THE PASSING AND PERMANENT
IN RELIGION," ETC.

Justify the ways of God to men.—MILTON

G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS
NEW YORK AND LONDON
The Knickerbocker Press

1905

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LIFE'S DARK PROBLEMS

CHAPTER I

THE ANSWER OF JOB

IT is indeed a strange scene that lies before us as we look out over the face of the earth and of human society. It is not at all, I suppose, the kind of world that any of us would have thought a wise and strong and good God would have created. It seems to us unreasonable, and it seems cruel.

Note the conditions beneath our feet, among the lowest forms of life, the grasses, the shrubs, the trees,—a contest going on none the less deadly because unconscious and unaccompanied by pain. The earth itself is a strange home for a sensitive and possibly suffering people,—earthquakes, volcanoes, cyclones, tidal waves, pestilences, poisons, powers of possible evil, on every hand.

And, when we come up the next step higher, and look at the state of affairs in the animal

world, we behold a scene of strife, superficially beautiful but also apparently cruel.

I believe that on the whole it is a scene of gladness and joy; and yet so many things of another and opposite character are thrust in our faces,—the serpent with his poisonous fangs lying in wait, the spider weaving his web for his victim, the hawk ready to swoop down upon the beautiful singing bird, wild beasts fighting in the jungles, fishes devouring one another in the seas and rivers.

So it is no wonder, looking at it in this way, that Tennyson should talk about

“Nature red in tooth and claw
With ravin,”

that he should speak of this same nature as shrieking against the creed of trust in the universal goodness and love.

And, when we front this human nature of ours, we find something more cruel than we discover among the lower forms of animal life, because here are ingenuity, able to devise more cruel methods,—hatred, wars, crimes of every kind, disease, pain, thwarted lives, blighted hopes, blasted ambitions, evils physical, mental, moral, spiritual.

And the great problem challenges us as to

whether in the face of these we can still believe in the goodness of things,—not only the goodness, but the wisdom. Some of the greatest writers of the world have tried their hand at the solution of this enigma.

Milton tells us that he wrote his great epic to “justify the ways of God to men.” Pope writes his famous *Essay* “to vindicate the ways of God to man.” And so writers both of prose and poem have tried to find a way through this great darkness which has so bewildered the eyes and burdened the hearts of the race.

Here is the creed of Pope :

“ All nature is but art, unknown to thee;
All chance, direction, which thou canst not see;
All discord, harmony not understood;
All partial evil, universal good;
And, spite of pride, in erring reason’s spite,
One truth is clear, Whatever is, is right.”

Can we really believe that? If we can, why, then we can sing with Browning,—

“ God ’s in His heaven,
All ’s right with the world.”

But let us see what John Stuart Mill thought about it. Yet note the significant fact that he wrote before the modern theory of evolution

had been demonstrated. And this theory of evolution completely flanks his difficulty, in my judgment.

What is it that Mill says? He says it is plain, in the face of the evils of the world, that God cannot at the same time be almighty and all-wise and all-good. If He is almighty, then He either fails in wisdom or goodness. If He is all-wise, then He is not strong enough to have His way, or else He is not quite good enough to care. If He is all-good, then He must lack either wisdom or power. Because, if He were all three, the universe would be perfect.

This is the dilemma which this great thinker presented to the world. But when we remember that the universe is in process, and not yet complete, we have a right to decline to accept either horn of Mr. Mill's dilemma, and still seek for a solution of our difficulty.

One or two points preliminary I need to present with as much clearness and force as possible. To the atheist, to him who does not believe in God, there is no problem to discuss. There is nothing for him to do except to take the position of the Stoic, and bear things as best he may.

If we here, in all our good and evil, are the

product of mere blind, unthinking, unintelligent force, why, then, what is the use of our fretting? There is nobody to complain about, there is nobody to complain to; there is nobody to get angry with, there is nobody to charge with injustice. There is no court of appeal, there is no hope of redress; and a man is as foolish to get bitter about it and angry as he would be to fight against the north-west wind when it is blowing.

If you are an agnostic, then, again, there is no problem. You simply give it up. You say, I do not know; and all you can do is to meet things as well as possible, and bear them as best you may.

The problem is for the theist. If we believe in God, then, somehow, somewhere, somewhen, things must be right. That is what believing in God means. So of course I shall assume, while I am discussing these questions, that we occupy the position of the theist. We believe in God; and yet we are bewildered and troubled as to how it is possible, along with the belief in Him, that such things should be.

I have taken the Book of Job as a first point for consideration, because in Hebrew literature and in Hebrew religious life—that literature and life which preceded Christianity

and out of which Christianity was born — it is the first formal attempt to deal with these questions.

It seems to me, then, important for us to consider the reach of this attempt to settle the problem. How near does it come to it? How much help is there for us in the Book of Job?

Before coming to that, however, directly, I must call your attention to the popular opinion of the time as to the cause of evil in the world. You will find that the whole Old Testament is practically at one here. It is worthy of note that the author of this book had not heard anything about the Garden of Eden or the fall of man in Adam.

How do we know that? Is it proof that he makes no reference to any of these things? I think it is, when we consider what it was that he attempted to do.

Here is a man who is undertaking to explain the fact that good people suffer in the world; and he knows about the fall of man and the agency of Satan, and the curse of God pronounced on the inanimate world, and the animal world, and the human world altogether. He knows that this is the ultimate reason; and yet in an elaborate and prolonged discussion he does not refer to it. This, of

course, is incomprehensible. We feel perfectly sure that Job knew nothing about the doctrine of the fall of man.

Now, what was the reason that was given throughout the Old Testament period? For it is worth your while to note that, with the exception of the first chapters of Genesis, there is nobody in the Old Testament who appears to have laid any stress on the doctrine of the fall. It is not mentioned anywhere else. It is never referred to as explaining anything.

And this means, of course, that these first chapters of Genesis came late in the history of Hebrew thought, although they appear in the first book of the Bible. This book was placed first in the Bible, not because it was the first book to be written, but because it was supposed to give an account of the creation of the world, and so that was the natural place for it.

We must waive one side, then, the whole question of the fall of man, so far as our present discussion is concerned.

It is important to notice the state of mind of the ordinary Hebrew as to the cause of human suffering. Read—for it is very brief, and it sums it all up—the first Psalm :

“Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor

sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law doth he meditate day and night."

And what is the result?

"And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. The ungodly are not so: but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away. Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. For the Lord knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish."

In other words, the teaching of the Old Testament is, that all suffering is the result of personal sin, that it is punishment on the part of God for disobedience; and that means that only bad people suffer. Good people, of course, cannot suffer. How can they be punished when they have done no wrong? How can a righteous God afflict them with evils when they have been true to Him? That is the doctrine of the Old Testament all the way through.

Do you remember those words of the Psalmist? I am afraid that when we do read the Bible we read it without very much thinking. "I have been young," he says, "and now

am old ; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread."

Think of it ! He had never seen a righteous man in trouble, nor the children of a righteous man in poverty ! His experience must have been rather narrow, or else he must have been blinded by a theory so as not to notice the facts.

The one punishment for doing wrong in the Old Testament, the one great, final punishment of all, is death. There is no punishment in any future life anywhere in the Old Testament. All reward and all punishment are confined to this life ; and the distinct and definite promise is that, if a man is good, he shall have—what ? Health, long life, children, business prosperity, honour among his neighbours,—all things that he desires shall be his if he is obedient to God.

And all things that he does not desire shall be his if he does not obey Him. That is the law of the Old Testament. That represents the popular opinion as to what actually took place.

And you can see, if you think a little closely, how cruel it sometimes became. It became terribly cruel in the case of Job. If you read the Old Testament through, you will find that everywhere it is good things for the good, bad

things for the bad, in this life. That was the popular explanation at the time the Book of Job was written.

I say this without knowing when that was. I suppose there is no possibility of settling the definite date of the book. We do not know who the author of it was, we do not know where it was written ; but that makes no difference with our position. This was the popular conception of the cause of human suffering at the time the book was composed and published.

And one thing for you to note is that this book takes a definite step ahead in dealing with these dark problems of human life. The author of the Book of Job had found out, what we know perfectly well, that the ordinary Old Testament explanation was not adequate ; that, though there might be some truth in it, it was not the whole truth, and that, if we were going to understand the ways of God to men, we must go deeper than this.

We all know how far from the truth this is. Just consider for a moment. I knew a case of a lady last summer, one of the truest, sweetest, noblest, tenderest women in all the world ; and yet she suffered beyond any power of describing it, through long weary days, long

weary nights, days and nights stretching out into horrible weeks, and weeks into horrible months.

Why could not she have died peaceably and quickly? Why must she suffer all this prolonged agony, until those that loved her best prayed that she might go? Was it for anything she had done? To any one who knew her the question is absurd. She was one of the sweetest and truest women in all the world.

On the other hand, here is some man who has broken all the Ten Commandments, and hunted after others to break, who, so far as we can see, suffers almost nothing at all,—lives prosperously, comfortably, indulgently, year in and year out; and then, when he has to go, at the last falls asleep in a moment, and escapes even the agony of dying.

We know that these things are common-places. I knew a young man, just on the verge of a life success, noble, sweet, true, pure, having shown that he had wings, a promise of power and fame; and yet in a moment his life was taken away.

On the other hand, I know another young man; and he has devoted himself since he was old enough to think to doing evil year after

year. He has broken his father's heart, and been a perpetual drain on his father's purse. This father has worked to shield him from disgrace, to keep him from the penitentiary ; and he has been a burden and a sorrow to everybody who knew him. But his health is good ; and, so far as any one can see, there is the prospect of a long life ahead of him.

You might multiply these cases by the hundred. Here is a man whose character is unimpeachable, but who is poor. He has struggled with poverty all his life long. Here, on the other hand, is a man who has no principles, and, apparently, no conscience ; and he is a business success, he is rich. No relation is visible between the results in either case and the moral character of the two men. And so in every direction.

I have known of persons artistic, musical, lovers of all that is beautiful and fair, who would have given half a life to have been able to cross the ocean and see the marvels of beauty that are to be discovered there ; and they have never been able.

I have seen in Europe by the dozen vulgarly wealthy people, with no appreciation of architecture or painting or music or sculpture or anything of the kind, wasting on follies or

vices a hundred times more than would be needed to satisfy the hunger and thirst of the noble souls.

Now these things are not equal, according to any measure which human equality has devised. If we had had the planning of the world, we certainly should not have made these things so.

We know, then, that it is not fair or true or right to charge a man with being a bad man because he is poor, or because he is sick, or because he has lost his friends, or because of suffering of any kind. We know that there is no necessary relation between these two facts. As much as this the writer of the Book of Job has discovered, so that his teaching is a distinct and definite step ahead, so far as the popular opinion of his age was concerned.

And now let us consider for a little this poem of Job, its story and its attempt to solve the difficulty.

It is unfortunate, so far as the literary value of parts of the Bible are concerned, that we have been accustomed to treat them purely as religious productions. The Book of Job is a poem with a prose prologue and epilogue. And how does it rank? If you should translate it and publish it in a book by itself as

a poem, it would rank with perhaps the six greatest of all the world.

It may stand unshamed beside Homer, Æschylus, Dante, Shakespeare, Milton, Goethe. A great poem. There are a few of the Psalms which are unsurpassed in the lyric literature of the world. There are parts of the Second Isaiah which in sublimity and power and grandeur are equal, perhaps, to the best in Job; but Job has this advantage,—it is a complete and formal and finished treatise by itself, and not merely a set of proclamations such as you find in the Second Isaiah.

Now what is this Book of Job, so far as it is an attempt to answer our question? Of course you are familiar with the story.

In a famous city of the East lived a famous man, the greatest of his whole country, the wealthiest, the man occupying the highest position; and he was faultless in character, upright and ideal in every way.

And, because he was this kind of a man, according to the popular ideals he had been blessed in every way. He had seven sons and three daughters. He had thousands of cattle and sheep and asses. He occupied a high position in the gates of his city. But even this man, although it contradicted all the

theories of the age, did not prove to be free from suffering.

The story goes that God is holding court one day, and the angels are gathered about Him, when Satan, an evil spirit, not yet fully developed into the modern Devil,—not shut up in hell, but free to travel whither he would,—appears among the other sons of God. And God calls his attention to His servant Job, and asks him if he had observed how remarkable he was. But he who has no faith in human goodness, without a satisfactory reason for it, answered that Job had been blessed in every way and had no reason for being bad. So he said: Now You destroy his property, touch his prosperity, and see what will be the result: he will curse You to Your face.

Whereupon God said: I turn him over into your hands. You can try him, but do not touch his person. You have full control over all that he owns—all that belongs to him. And then, suddenly, one series of calamities follows another. His oxen, sheep, and asses are captured or destroyed. And then his children, the seven sons and the three daughters, are feasting together, and a whirlwind comes and seizes the building where they are sitting, and overwhelms them in sudden ruin.

And Job sees everything that he cares for on earth stripped away. Still, he does not complain or utter one word of fault against his Maker.

Again the sons of God are gathered in the court of heaven, and Satan appears among them; and God calls his attention to the fact that his attempt has proved a failure. Whereupon Satan says: Yes, but everything a man has will he give for his life. Touch his body now, and see what will be the result. And God says: I give him then, as far as his physical condition is concerned, completely into your hands: only spare his life.

And then Job is afflicted with a loathsome disease from head to foot, and sits desolate in the ashes; and even his wife turns against him, and wonders why he does not curse God and die. And still he brings no railing accusation against his Maker.

Here, then, the author of Job holds up this wonderful problem for the people who had been accustomed to believe that suffering meant sin of some kind. Here is this perfect man suffering everything. But it seems curious to me that Job never finds out what had been going on behind the scenes. God does not tell him why He had afflicted him

in this way. He does not know anything about Satan's agency in the matter.

But, while he sits thus disconsolate, his three friends come to visit him ; and no wonder their poor comfort has turned their names into a proverb. They come, and sit down with Job ; and though they had been his friends, and honoured and known him all his life, they are so filled with the idea that suffering must mean wrong-doing that they can think of no other explanation. And so through long chapters they lay all sorts of sins to his charge, and ask him why he conceals what he has been guilty of, why he does not confess, why he adds hypocrisy to his other crimes.

The three friends will not believe for a moment that God is anything but just ; and, if He is just, of course Job's suffering means punishment for something that he has been doing. The main part of the Book of Job, sublime in poetry and beautiful in its argument, is taken up with playing on different phases of this one theme.

Job meantime protests that he is innocent, says he wishes he could find some way of coming into the presence of his Judge and pleading his cause with Him ; he wishes there was some one as a mediator to stand between him

and his Judge; and it is wonderful the character that is revealed when, even in the last extremity he has given up hope, he says: He will slay me; I have no doubt He will slay me; yet I will trust in Him.

After these three friends have exhausted themselves, then comes the fourth; and he deals in the same kind of criticisms, varying them somewhat by talking about the mystery of the universe.

But at last God Himself appears, and speaks out of the whirlwind; and what does He say? He says nothing about what had been going on behind the scenes. He does not tell Job that He has been testing him. He does not tell him that Satan has had anything to do with it. He rebukes him for his presumption, and then overwhelms him through wonderful chapter after chapter by portraying the inexplicable marvels of the universe, and saying to him: If you cannot answer these questions, if you cannot understand these mysteries, why should you presume to comprehend the dealings of the Infinite One?

That is God's answer to the sufferer. He turns then, and rebukes the friends who have misjudged him, condemns them utterly, and says they can be forgiven only after Job has

offered a sacrifice and made prayers in their behalf.

Then, at the end, comes that strange restitution. Job has seven more sons given him, and three daughters, the most beautiful women in the East ; and he has twice as many yoke of oxen, and twice as many sheep and asses. His prosperity is doubled, and the book ends ; and where are we, so far as any solution of our problem is concerned ?

We cannot to-day take as an explanation of anything that goes on in the world the agency of evil spirits. We cannot believe that God permits evil spirits in the other world to interfere with the forces of nature, to produce storms, tempests, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, pestilences, disease, evils of any kind.

In the first place, we do not believe there are any spirits that have power over the forces of nature ; it is utterly unscientific and incomprehensible to the mind of any intelligent person ; and we cannot believe that any good God would let any evil spirit do it, even if there were those who were capable of it.

We have come at last to recognise the fact that power does not confer irresponsibility. The old theory was that might meant right. The chief of a tribe could not do wrong.

Whatever he did was accepted. But to-day we say that, if a man authorises an agent or permits an agent to do a certain thing, he is responsible. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" Shall we not think of God as being as good as we expect men to be?

So, if it were possible for God to authorise or permit an evil spirit to do a certain thing, he would be responsible for the result. It hardly needs saying this to-day; and yet our Puritan forefathers believed it all. And you will find people talking to-day as though they believed it, when, if you ask them the direct question, probably they would deny it.

Another point. We cannot any longer believe that God would put a good man through a course of suffering, inflict evil upon him merely as the result of a whim on His part, to test him, to prove that he was superior to wrong-doing. We cannot believe that such is the explanation of any of the sufferings of the world.

God has no right to subject His children to unnecessary pain or disease or heartache merely because He is God, merely because He has the power.

There is another thing that is a part of the

explanation of the Book of Job which cannot help us much to-day. They tell us at the last that Job had all his losses made up to him. Did he? He had seven sons and three daughters given him; but they were not the ones he had lost. It is all very well to double the amount of his property loss. He might bear that, say that was adequate compensation; but if God has taken away my child, whom I loved as I love my life, would it be any compensation to me to give me another child?

I might indeed love the other child; but what of that first overwhelming loss,—a loss that the years cannot take away? There is no explanation there.

Then the last one of all is simply to overwhelm us, shut our mouths and drown us, so to speak, in the sense of God's mysteries. All Jehovah does when He appears is to ask Job questions that he cannot answer, and overwhelm him with the thought of his inability to comprehend the Infinite.

Is that any answer? Does that help us to bear our burdens? Indeed, one thing is true. If I could be perfectly certain that I have a Father in heaven, that He loves me, that He is almighty, that He is all-wise,—if I can be

perfectly certain of that, and if I can know that He asks me to wait without understanding something that He is doing, why of course I can wait. That is easy enough.

A boy can wait if his father tells him that he knows what he is doing, and will explain it to him by and by when he gets ready. Of course he can.

But, so far as the great modern heart of the world is concerned, it is this very question of the fatherhood, the love, the justice, the power in the heavens, that is in question.

I am overwhelmed with letters from all over the world bearing on these problems. I received one from a lovely old lady down in the State of Maine some months ago. In it she asked me pitifully, tearfully, as to whether she can any longer believe that she has a Father in heaven. She said, I used to believe that ; but in presence of the calamities, the sorrows, the sufferings, the evils of the world, I am beginning to wonder whether I really have one. That is the question.

So, simply to tell us that the universe is a mystery we cannot fathom does not help us to wait patiently in the presence of these great sorrows that we cannot, on that theory alone, explain.

The Book of Job, then, although it was a step ahead for its age, does not help us much. We must go on with our study, trusting that by and by we may find a better answer.

CHAPTER II

SOME THEOLOGICAL ANSWERS

AS the Book of Job was the first formal attempt made on the part of anybody connected with the Hebrew people to solve this problem as to the relation of suffering and evil to the goodness of the world, we have considered that first. We found no satisfactory answer there to our question. I propose now to ask you to consider some of the theological attempts that have been made at an explanation.

If we go back towards the beginning of human history, we shall find that this difficulty did not really exist. In other words, the theory of things was such that suffering and evil found an easy explanation. The explanation, when we consider their intellectual and moral point of view, was a very natural and satisfactory one.

What was it? They believed that when people died, men and women, they did not cease to exist; they only passed into an invisible world; and this invisible world was not

far off somewhere ; it was close around us. The spirits of the dead were just the same kind of people that they used to be here. Some of them were good, some of them were bad, vindictive, mischievous, evil ; and they were endowed, in the beliefs of the people of the time, with an indefinite extension of the power which they used to possess here. They were not only as strong as they were here, but a good deal stronger ; and they were supposed to have control over what we regard to-day as natural forces.

So these invisible people were everywhere. They haunted the places where they used to live, where their bodies were buried ; they were in all the air, mingling with all the life of the time ; and the good ones, the friendly ones, were ready to help, and the bad ones were ready to harm. And, when anything evil occurred, this was their ready, their natural explanation : it was the work of some mischievous or malignant or evil spirit.

It was supposed, for example, that they had a certain control over natural forces. They could produce tempests, they could blight the crops, they could interfere with all sorts of occupations, they could produce disease and death. And so, whenever anything evil

occurred, it was very easy to attribute it to the work of some one of these inimical and invisible powers.

They had not risen at that time to any conception whatever of what we regard to-day as natural forces and natural laws. Everything that happened, good or bad, was the work of some one of these invisible persons.

They had then here no special problem. There was no necessity on their part to reconcile these things that occurred to the goodness of any ruling Power. These good forces did what they could to help them. Sometimes they could fight against and thwart the purposes of the evil ones; but all they could do—if these invisible friends did not interfere to protect them—was to placate or buy off these wicked gods,—so far as they were able, to try and win their favour.

These ideas were not outgrown even in what we regard with so much admiration as the palmy days of Greece and Rome. The gods were some of them good, some of them bad, some of them friendly, some of them hostile. They were open to the same kinds of motives and influences that people were in this world.

As an illustration, take the famous ten years' siege of the city of Troy. What was the cause

of it? Why, three of the goddesses entered into competition as to which of them should be regarded as the most beautiful; and Paris was made the arbiter. Each one offered him some prize, tried to bribe him to a judgment in her favour. He decided for Venus; and of course the other two were made the enemies not only of him but of his whole people.

And, as we read the story of the siege as recorded in Homer, it is seen that Juno was always fighting against the Trojans, and Venus was doing what she could to protect them. They were each trying to get the aid of Jupiter and to have him favour her side; and they even descended into the conflict, and took part in the battles, like the other warriors.

You see how comparatively modern these ideas are,—that the good and the evil of this life are produced by the good and evil powers in conflict in the other life.

When we come to the beginning of definite Hebrew history or when we begin with that which is farther back and more or less legendary, we find that for some unexplained reason the Hebrews had little belief in these other-world forces.

From the time of Moses until the Captivity these ideas of other-worldly influences playing

a part in the life of men had very little to do with Hebrew belief. They did believe after a fashion in spirits in the other world. There was, so to express it, a sort of submerged belief of this kind ; but it plays no part in the formal religion or in the definite teachings of the Hebrew people.

We know that they did have some belief of this kind, because it is witnessed to us by such stories as that of the witch of Endor and by the fact that the lawgivers prohibited people having anything to do with "familiar spirits." This shows that they were more or less believed in.

But there came into the Hebrew creed another explanation of the existence of evil which has played so important a part in Christian theology that we must give it a little definite and careful attention. We do not know just when it appeared. The story is contained to-day in the Book of Genesis ; but the early prophets of the eighth century before Christ seem not to have known anything about it, and it bears traces of Persian and Babylonian influence, so that it may not have taken definite shape in the Hebrew mind until down towards the period of the Captivity.

The story is placed in the first book in the

Bible, not because that was the first book written, but because it contains what was believed to be the history of the beginnings.

What is this explanation? It is nothing less than the story of the Fall of Man. It is worth while to note certain features of it, to which, perhaps, less attention has been given than they deserve.

It came to be believed by the Hebrews that God created the first man and woman perfect, and placed them in a garden. Up to this time no evil of any kind existed ; everything was perfectly good. All was happiness and peace. There was no warfare among the lower animals ; there were no noxious weeds or growths of any kind. It was a perfect world.

God laid one prohibition, and one only, on the first man : he was not to eat of the fruit of the tree of knowledge, whatever that might be. He disobeys ; and so we are told that, as the result of that, all evil came into the world. The animals, who had been peaceful up to that time, began to slay and prey upon each other. The ground was cursed, so that it brought forth its crops with difficulty. It was threatened that Eve and her descendants should bear children in pain and suffering as the result of this eating of the forbidden fruit.

And last of all, death was pronounced against them as a penalty. Not only death for them, but for all their descendants in all time, and suffering and pain and every kind of evil for all time.

Not only that. Those who were not specially saved by a scheme of redemption which was revealed ages after, and of which, of course, the people at that time could know nothing,—they were to suffer the penalty of everlasting torment in the next life.

Here, then, is the explanation which for ages dominated Hebrew thought, and which for the last nineteen hundred years has dominated Christian theology. It has been believed that this was an adequate, satisfactory, rational, and moral explanation of the coming of evil into the world. Let us look at it for just a moment.

In the first place, if you think of it carefully, you will see that Adam had no sort of fair probation. Dr. Edward Beecher, the elder and hardly less famous brother of Henry Ward Beecher, published a book some years ago in which he demonstrated at length that Adam had no fair probation. In order to do that, he must have been able to look down the ages and foresee for all time, not only, but through

eternity, the results of his action. He must have been perfectly free to choose, and must have chosen with an eye to all the conditions and all the results.

Of course, it is absurd for us to suppose for a minute that he had any such intelligence, that he had any such foresight, that he comprehended in all its fulness what he was doing.

It was threatened against him that he should die, that was all. Nothing was said, mark you, by the Creator at that time about all of his descendants dying, nothing was said about any future punishment in another life. He is simply threatened with death, if he eats the fruit of that tree.

And here comes another very mysterious, intelligent Power, and talks with him, and tells him it is pure jealousy; says that God knows perfectly well that he will not die, he will become very wise, and know good and evil, if he eats of the fruit. And Adam was not quite sure which he was to believe. At any rate there was no fair probation.

Then there is another consideration for us to take into account. Even if Adam had understood all about it, had known perfectly what he was doing, had chosen deliberately, think of another feature of the case.

Why should I, five or six thousand years (according to the popular chronology) after that time, be suffering, be regarded as a sinner, be treated as a victim of God's anger, for what somebody else did over whose action I had absolutely no control? Why should I be in danger of eternal torment because a man six thousand years ago chose to eat an apple after he was forbidden to do it?

Think for an instant. It is simply amazing that intelligent, moral men can have considered and discussed and weighed a problem like this for centuries. It is simply hideously unjust and immoral,—the whole conception.

I say deliberately, if there were a Power in the universe capable of doing any such thing, that there never has lived a man since the beginning of the world that was one-thousandth part as bad as he.

Think of explaining the existence of pain and sin and suffering in that sort of fashion!

But there are two or three other considerations. In the first place we know perfectly well to-day—there is not a shadow of question about it—that thorns and thistles and poisonous growths and vipers were in existence before man came on the planet at all. How, then, could they have been the result of his action?

There have been curious, ingeniously ludicrous attempts to get over this difficulty. I remember a doctor of divinity saying that God placed these things on the earth before man appeared, because He knew that man was going to fall after he did appear.

Then there is another feature of the immorality of this solution. I was taught, when I was in the Divinity School, that God created Adam in such a way and so circumstanced him that he would fall; and yet He held Adam responsible for it because He did not in some outright fashion make him fall. He knew that He was going to create him on purpose to do it; it was essential to the scheme of things that he should; and yet Adam is held responsible, and we are to suffer for it for all time and eternity.

And there is a Presbyterian doctor of divinity, a famous theological teacher of my time, and whose books I have had in my library, who has actually taught that a babe, when first born, is guilty in the presence of God.

For what? We must leave him to explain. But there is one other consideration. All educated people to-day know that there never was any fall of man or any Eden. The story is of no more moral or spiritual consequence than

are the myths of Hercules or of Jason and the Golden Fleece. It is the ascent of man and not his fall with which we have to deal.

We must waive the fall of man aside then, as a rational explanation of the existence of evil in the world.

Let us continue our search. When we come to the New Testament, do we find any real help in our difficulty? Let me ask you to think, very candidly and clearly. The Gospels know nothing about the fall of man. Paul was the first of the New Testament writers. His whole theology starts with and hinges on the doctrine of the fall, and Pauline theology has dominated Christendom for the last nineteen hundred years.

Paul teaches that evil came into the world by the fall of the first Adam. We are to be delivered from evil by the suffering and death of the second Adam. So out of these conceptions he wrought his theological scheme.

But he did better than most of his followers, because he was a Universalist. He taught that some time everybody was going to be delivered as a result of the salvation which had been prepared and which he was proclaiming to the world.

Leaving Paul then out of account, let us

look at the New Testament, and see what it has to offer by way of explanation for these dark facts of human life.

Two or three hundred years perhaps before Christ, the Hebrews had come to believe that we were surrounded on every hand by good and evil spirits in the invisible, as so many of their neighbours had previously believed. Thus in the time of Christ the air above and around was supposed to be full of spirits, good and bad. Here was the seat of Satan's kingdom. He is spoken of in the New Testament as "the prince of the powers of the air"; and these powers of the air were the invisible inhabitants everywhere thronging throughout space.

If you will read an account of the thought of that time, you will have all this worked out for you in detail. It was even said to be impossible for a man to throw a stone without hitting some spirit, the air was so full of them.

And what were they doing? They were good and bad; and they were contending together for the prize of the human soul. And man was to try the spirits, if he had anything to do with them, to find out which were good and bad, to link himself with one and against the other; for this battle of good and

evil was going on not only among men, but in the invisible world that enfolded them as well.

So that here we find ourselves back towards the beginning of the world, so far as an explanation of these dark problems is concerned.

I wish you to note in detail as to what some of these beliefs were. It was supposed that these evil spirits could bring to pass all sorts of evil results,—a pestilence, a famine, disease, death. The New Testament is full of the idea that certain kinds of diseases especially were produced by evil spirits.

Nearly all persons who were suffering from nervous disorders and insanity were supposed to be possessed of devils,—that was the explanation of it ; and we find Jesus himself apparently accepting that idea. He talks about casting out devils, tells the disciples why they could not on certain occasions cast them out, and seems to share the popular belief of the time.

But not only that. Here is a man who has been born blind ; and the disciples ask Jesus, Who is it that has sinned, the man himself—in a previous state of existence of course—or his father or mother ? Somebody has sinned, or else it was the work of an evil spirit.

You remember the case of the woman who

came to be healed. It is said she had been afflicted for eighteen years ; she had been bent double. Jesus healed her on the Sabbath Day ; and he is criticised for doing it. He said : You loose one of your animals on the Sabbath, you help a sheep out of a pit. Shall I not then release this woman, who has been bound by Satan for eighteen years?

He accepts the idea that this was the cause of the woman's trouble, that it was Satanic in its origin.

You remember the tower that fell and killed a lot of people. It never seemed to occur to any one that it had not been built properly, or that the foundation had given way, or that there was any natural cause for its fall ; but it was a judgment of God, and it was discussed from that point of view. Then there was the deaf-and-dumb man. He had a deaf-and-dumb spirit.

So we find that the New Testament teaches that nearly all evils are caused by evil spirits, or that they are judgments of God for sin, or—and now one other reason. The reason is implied in a good many other passages ; but it is taught deliberately in the twelfth chapter of the Book of Hebrews.

God chastens His children ; God punishes

them if they are really His children, as earthly parents are supposed to punish their children for their own good.

I cannot help wondering, let me say here in parenthesis, as to how much of the hardening of fathers' and mothers' hearts, and of cruelty towards children, may have originated in this kind of New Testament teaching.

The point is here. It says distinctly: If you are really one of God's children, one of His sons, then you must expect to be whipped. Earthly parents have whipped their children for their good. God whips His children for their good; and here is an explanation for a great deal of the suffering that good people have to endure.

Can we accept that? I can not. As I look over the world, what do I see? I see that not only good people are whipped, but bad people are not. Some good people are not whipped, and some bad are. There does not seem to be anything rational, consistent, or orderly in the procedure. If people are whipped when they are good, it is for the sake of training them and making them better or it is because temporarily they have done something wrong and need to be corrected.

Now what do we find in the world? We

find some of the sweetest, truest, noblest souls that ever lived, who have never thought an evil thought or done an evil deed, who have suffered year-long torture. I cannot reconcile a fact like that with God's chastising people for their own good.

And in another direction you find that people are chastened who are not benefited by it. If God really whips people to make them better, they ought to be made better. He is strong enough to do as He wills; nobody is able to defeat His purpose; but we find that people who are fairly good, to start with, are made bitter and hard by this chastisement. It does not work out for them the peaceable fruits of righteousness in a large number of cases.

I cannot believe for one moment that God goes through this world and picks out a person here, and says he is to suffer such and such punishment, and here is another, who is to suffer something else, and here another, and he shall suffer something else; and here is another, for no reason that we can see, who is not to suffer at all. It simply makes confusion. It interferes with any clear or rational or moral account of things to believe that such is God's method of doing things.

I find a great deal in the New Testament that is inspiring and helpful and comforting and divine,—but I cannot find there any explanation for the evils and sufferings and sorrows of the world.

Let us come up the years since the New Testament time, and see what we discover. During the last nineteen hundred years almost precisely these same ideas have prevailed universally throughout Christendom. In the Middle Ages you will find that pestilence and famine and disease and suffering and death are explained either as the work of devils or as a judgment of God, or the chastisement of God inflicted arbitrarily on His children; and, instead of studying a pestilence or a disease to find out any natural cause for it, they attack it—how? With prayers, with the relics of saints, with charms, with processions, with what is pure and simple magic; and that has been practically universal for the last nineteen hundred years.

Consider our forefathers in this country, here in New York, and in New England, in all the Colonies that made up the country before the Revolution. The same ideas prevailed: many of these evils were the work of evil spirits. In Massachusetts what a visita-

tion they had of witchcraft, evil spirits at work in human life, judgments of God in every direction, or else God in some mysterious way choosing to punish His children for something they did not understand !

Our Puritan and New York forefathers ! Have we outlived it yet ? Let me give you one or two memories as illustrative. Some years ago, when I was in an orthodox church, I helped carry on a series of meetings with a famous revivalist. Over and over again he talked to the people in his sermons about God's placing a coffin across their path to make them repent.

What does that mean ? It means that God deliberately and purposely kills one of your family or friends, one of your children, to make you come forward in a revival meeting. Can you have any respect—to say nothing of a feeling of worship—for that kind of God ?

I remember a personal friend in Boston, a teacher in one of the public schools, and naturally more than average in her intelligence ; and yet she told me, after her sister died, that she was afraid that God had taken her sister away. Why ? Because she had not attended regularly enough the church services during Lent !

God in heaven killing people because their friends do not go to church in Lent ! Think of it ! Think of the barbarism ! What a thin veneer of civilisation it is that the world has yet put on !

When I was in a church in the West, there was a fire in a neighbouring city. The ministers all went to preaching about it as a judgment of God. I noticed, however, in the accounts in the newspaper one curious fact : the last thing that the fire burned was a good, sound orthodox church, and right next to it, left standing unharmed, was a saloon.

It seemed to be a curious kind of divine judgment that burned a church and spared the saloon. And, if you will study these cases of divine judgment, you will find large numbers of them defective in this way. They are neither reasonable nor moral ; and they do not explain anything.

What point, then, have we reached so far in our investigation ? We have discovered—according to my judgment, at any rate—that none of these attempts to explain is an adequate, rational, or moral explanation. Evil exists, suffering, pain, heartache—why ? The attempts to tell us why so far seem to me entirely to fall short. Religion so far has not

given us a satisfactory explanation. It has told us about the divine power and the divine life, and it overwhelms us with the fact of the divine mystery ; but it does not explain.

It has done one grand, sweet thing. It has told us to believe that we have a Father ; it has told us to trust in this Father ; it has told us to be patient under our burdens ; it has told us to take care that the evils of life do not crush our spirits ; it has told us to meet them bravely and simply and faithfully ; it has told us to see to it that, whatever the conditions of our lives are, we shall work out some grand, fine, sweet result, that we shall not let these things overwhelm us ; and that is much.

But I believe that we shall be able at last to find some satisfactory clews to at least some of these mysteries. We have not reached them yet ; so we must still go on in our search.

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CHAPTER III

THE DIVINE GOVERNMENT

GOD has made to us no supernatural revelation as to His method of governing the world. He has left us, as indeed He has in every other direction, to find out for ourselves. We discover it by study and by experience, and it is better that it is so ; for by the processes of study and experience we not only discover truth, but we grow, we develop, so that we can understand, comprehend, and feel that which we have attained.

Such being the case, it is perfectly natural that men in different stages of human development should have transferred to the heavens their best ideals of earthly conditions. What else could they do? We are men : we have to think as men, imagine as men. We have to think from our human point of view ; and it may be accurate as far as it goes. The only difficulty is that the world has in so many cases imagined that the crude and ignorant conceptions of the early world were definitely

inspired, and so infallible and not to be improved upon. So these old ideas persist even after we are wise enough to have learned something better.

It was natural, then, that the first men, the early men of the world, should have thought of the world as governed as their particular tribe or kingdom was governed. So they imagined a king seated on a throne, and arbitrarily directing the affairs of the world. An emperor, if he be an absolute monarch, issues a command, an edict, an ukase. He orders that certain things be done, that certain other things be not done ; and he attaches to these orders an entirely arbitrary sequence in the way of reward or punishment. It is " You do thus, and I will do so."

There is no natural, no necessary causal link between the thing done and the reward or the punishment. It is, as I have said, purely arbitrary ; and we know in a good many kingdoms in this world subjects have been rewarded, set on high, enriched, ennobled, for doing wrong, for ministering, for example, to the king's vices. And other men, who were noble and true, have been punished, even to being put to death, for doing right. And it has not been uncommon indeed, but has been almost

universal in the kingdoms of this world, that a subject's offences against the king's dignity or person have been regarded as of a great deal more importance than right action towards the neighbour or the fellow-man.

It is a greater crime to-day in Germany to insult the Kaiser than it is to steal or to lie or to cheat in business; and a man is a good deal more certain of being severely punished for it.

This hints at what is true in a hundred different directions; and that which has been true in regard to these earthly governments has been supposed to be true in regard to the heavenly. In almost all of the religions of the world it has been a greater offence to speak slightingly of the Deity, to disregard some one of His ordinances, to do despite to some form of public worship, to commit sacrilege, as we say, or blasphemy, than it has been to be dishonest, to injure ever so seriously one's fellow-man.

The point is that these results of reward or punishment have not only been arbitrary, but a great many times they have not been conditioned on moral action, on what we are accustomed to think of as right or wrong.

This has been true of earthly governments :

it has been supposed to be true of heavenly governments. The whole thing, then, has been arbitrary. People have been supposed to be poor or to be sick or to be disgraced in some way, to lose their friends, to die themselves, not necessarily because they were bad in any human sense of the word, but because of some offence against an arbitrary enactment.

What do we know to-day? It is not a question among intelligent people. We know that the world is not governed after any such fashion. We live in a universe where there is a demonstrated universal and eternal order. Everything is under laws of cause and effect.

There are no rewards in this world, so far as God's actions towards the world is concerned; there are no punishments,—of course I am using these words in their ordinary meaning,—there are only results. Everything that happens is preceded by some other thing that stands in what we call a causal relation to it. This thing being what it is, this other thing necessarily follows under ordinary conditions; and that is everywhere the case. It is worth while to note the scientific meaning of the word "law." I hear people, those who are well educated in modern thought, who have not outgrown a careless use of language, speak

of law as though it were a cause, as though it did things, as though it governed or controlled affairs. Law, as the scientists use the word, is not a ceremony like that of the Mosaic legislation. It is not an edict issued by a king, a parliament, or a congress. It is simply the name for a process. It is only a name, a name for an observed order. As an illustration, we say that it is the law, a law of nature, that water will freeze at a temperature of thirty-two degrees F.; and it always will, normal conditions prevailing. That is a law of nature, a law of God expressed in and manifested through nature.

It is a law in chemistry that in the case of certain elements a certain number will always combine in precisely the same way to produce a certain definite and fixed result. It never varies. It will do it the first time you try it and do it the millionth time you try it. These forces will always act in precisely the same way under precisely similar conditions.

So everywhere in the universe is observable this fixed, this changeless order, no matter whether we like it or dislike it, no matter whether we think it is the best way to govern the universe or not. This is what the world has discovered to be true.

We have been accustomed in the past, as an illustration of what I mean, to pray for rain. The Old Testament tells us that the prophet on a certain occasion, endowed by authority of God to do so, shut up the heavens, so that there was not a particle of rain for three years and six months ; and then again, when he asked God to send the rain, it came once more.

Can we think of anything like that as possible to-day ? I know people are not through yet with praying for rain, supposing that they can change the atmospheric conditions. If you for a moment look into the skies over your head this morning, the conditions that exist are connected by an unbroken series with the conditions of yesterday and the day before, and so back for millions of years ; and there never anywhere along the whole line has been the slightest arbitrary interference with those conditions.

To change those conditions this morning, to blot out one tiny drop of moisture, would be as great a miracle as though by prayer or force of will you could hurl the Catskills into New York harbor. One would be just as much a miracle as the other.

We are in a universe, then, where the universal laws of cause and effect prevail.

Is this a bad thing? I think it the most blessed thing conceivable. Let me suggest to you one or two considerations concerning it.

In the first place, it is a necessary inference from the fact that God is perfectly wise. Consider,—of course, I use this only to illustrate,—if we could imagine God as doing something the first time, He does it of course in the best conceivable way, the perfect way. Suppose He has occasion to do it again. Conditions being the same, will He not do it again in the best conceivable way,—that is, in the same way? If He has to do it the third time, will He not do it in the same way? If He has to do it millions and millions of times, will He not always do it in the best way,—that is, the same way, conditions being the same?

Do you not see, then, that the statement of one of the New Testament writers that speaks of Him as “without variableness or shadow of turning” is the necessary corollary of His being a perfectly wise Being,—that is, of His being God?

Another consideration. If it were not for this perfect and invariable order, do you not see that we could never know anything? Study, human knowledge, science, would be impossible.

Water freezes at thirty-two degrees F. under

ordinary conditions. Suppose I learn that fact to-day. To-morrow I try it, and find out that it freezes at thirty-four or twenty-five. Could I ever know anything about the qualities of water or what it would do under different conditions? If it is one thing at one time and something else at another time, knowledge is impossible; and what is true in regard to that is true everywhere.

In order that I may study, in order that I may lay out an intelligent plan for my human life and follow it year after year, I must be able to count on things. I must be able to know that there is a perfect order, and that God and His methods and His works are "the same yesterday, to-day, and forever."

Not only that, there is still another consideration. In a world where this was not true, anything like moral growth and development would be impossible. I must be able to know what will result from a certain thought, a certain course of conduct, certain words that I utter. I must know that this is an orderly world, so that I can deal with it intelligently, so that I can rely upon results before I am able to develop anything like a consistent character that stands in any intelligent relation to an orderly world.

People do not believe this yet. Intelligent people, if they know it, forget it. People who are perfectly familiar with the results of modern science seem at times to entirely overlook it. My mail is flooded with letters from people who do not know it or who forget it.

Almost every day on the street I converse with somebody who either does not know it or who forgets it. For example, a man says to me: "I have tried to be good. Why must I suffer from being ill?"—"I have tried to be good. Why has God taken my child, my wife, away from me?"—"I have tried to be good. Why have I lost my money, or why have I not been able to make more money than I have?"—"Here is a person who is not good at all, and he is prosperous and apparently happy. I have tried to be good, and I am not prosperous."

What do questions like these mean? They mean that the person that asks them either does not believe in a definite order in the government of the world or else, for the time being, he has overlooked these facts.

Let us now take up, by way of illustration, to make the matter perfectly clear, and consider several departments of human activity. Here is a farmer, for example. It used to be

the custom to pray for a good crop, to pray for rain when there was a drought. It used to be the custom, when the corn was planted, to organise a religious service or procession. There were all sorts of ceremonials gone through that were supposed to produce certain results on the crop. Now, is it not perfectly clear, as we think of it to-day, that this is not the divine way ?

The universe, as we know it, as the result of modern science, is a different universe. It is a moral universe ; it is an orderly universe, a true one that you can count on and deal with. You can produce results ; but you must produce them in a natural way—that is, in a definite way, in accordance with the definitely established conditions to be found there.

If a farmer finds a good piece of soil,—he knows a good piece of soil when he sees it, and finds it,—if he prepares it properly, if he plants good seed, if the sun shines and the rain falls, if he hoes it, cultivates it, of course he will have a good crop ; and whether, morally or religiously speaking, he is a good man or a bad man will have nothing whatever to do with the ripening of his harvest. Will it ? Can it ?

As a farmer dealing with soils and seeds and crops, he is obeying God, so far as the farming

is concerned; and the results are natural, they are inevitable. It is God's eternal working that produces these results. Whether he swears, whether he drinks too much, whether he is kind to his wife and children, whether he is a good neighbour or not,—those things have nothing whatever to do with the fact that, as a farmer, he has found out God's way and obeyed Him; and the result of necessity follows.

It is impertinent to introduce any other conditions. It is not piety to suppose that God will change His universal and eternal laws as to the farm because some one prays.

Prayer is good in its place; but it has nothing necessarily to do with farming. It concerns another department of human life.

Let us consider it in another department. It used to be said that the Cunard steamships were so universally safe to travel in because every time a steamer sailed from port prayers were offered for its safety.

Here again, if that were true, if prayers could take a steamship safely across the Atlantic from port to port, then why not let praying do the whole business? Why not send any sort of an old ship to sea with any sort of men aboard, whether they know any-

thing about navigation or not? If prayer be a substitute for shipbuilding and knowledge of navigation and a compliance with its laws, why then you may leave one side the whole business of navigation, and let prayer do the whole.

But here again, if the man who stands at the wheel keeps the ship pointed in the right direction, if the ship has been properly constructed to do his will,—that is, if the laws of God touching navigation have been understood and obeyed,—then the ship passes safely over the sea; and it is of no consequence, so far as navigation is concerned, as to what is the moral character of the captain or the sailors or what their personal habits may be.

It is of a great deal of importance, looked at from some other point of view; but if I were going to sail from New York to Liverpool, I should prefer the finest steamer I could discover, the most experienced captain, and I would rather have them, and have them entirely neglectful of religion, entirely oblivious to morals, have them engage in profanity if they pleased all the way over, than to have another set of men who knew nothing about navigation, in a miserable ship, though they conducted a prayer-meeting from port to port.

In other words, it is not obedience to the will of God to neglect His laws at sea when you wish to make a voyage, and attempt to substitute for that the keeping of some other law that has no reference whatever to navigation. Piety towards God, in sailing the sea, is discovering and obeying the laws of the sea, which are God's laws.

A hint, an illustration, in one other department of life, because it is spoken of so very commonly,—the conduct of business. Ever since I can remember I have had people talking to me as though they expected God to reward them in cash payments for being good ; that is, if they were loving, true, kind, moral, and religious, that they ought to get along in a business way, and they wonder at the government of a world that lets bad people get rich and good people stay poor.

Can you not see that here, again, there is no sort of causal connection between the two whatsoever? Here are men who have a business genius, as truly as other men have an artistic genius or a scientific genius or a musical genius. They can make money anywhere. I have known cases of a man in a certain situation failing, another man's taking up the same business precisely on the same spot and mak-

ing himself rich. The difference was not in the difference of the conditions, but simply in the difference of the men. One had the natural ability, and the other did not ; and this financial ability, again, is not necessarily connected with either religion or morals in any causal way.

A man is not necessarily bad because he is rich. He is not necessarily good because he is poor. God does not punish people by taking money away from them arbitrarily. He does not reward them by giving them money arbitrarily. The accumulation of money is a perfectly natural process, under natural conditions ; and the people who have the opportunity and who know how to do it are the ones who make money and keep it, and so are recognised in the world to-day in a commercial way.

But remember that, while I have given illustrations in three departments of human life, the same principles and laws hold true in every department of life.

I have known mothers who mourned because God, as they say, makes a child ill or takes it away. Some of us who stand beside and observe them believe that we can find the causes at work without laying the responsibility

on God at all. We may not have to go any farther than the carelessness or the ignorance or the pride of the mother.

Causes produce results here just as well as anywhere else. If the best man in the world be exposed to yellow fever, and his system be in the condition to feel the touch of the infection, and he has yellow fever and dies, his being good has nothing to do with it.

If a good man take arsenic by mistake, God does not suspend the laws of the universe because of his lamentable blunder; and it is well for us that He does not.

This universal order is infinitely more important to the welfare and happiness of the world than is the continued life of any one man, no matter who or how good he may be.

If the best man in the universe walk over the edge of a precipice in the dark, the force of gravity will not be suspended for his personal benefit.

This universe moves on. The only safety for us is to learn the laws of its movement, and keep out of its way. It will not stop because we are imprudent, because we make a mistake, because we choose impudently to defy it, because we pray, because we are religious, because we are moral.

As Matthew Arnold has written it in *Empedocles on Etna* :

“Streams will not curb their pride
The just man not to entomb,
Nor lightnings go aside
To give his virtues room.”

But this universe in its regular working does not produce equal results, people tell me. The inequality of human conditions is one of the grave charges made against the government of the world. Let us consider it for a moment in the light of this universal order which we have been discussing.

Nothing,—no two things have ever been discovered that were precisely alike, so far as the work of nature is concerned. There are not two leaves in the forest alike, no two trees alike, no two birds alike, no two animals alike, no two men or women alike.

Indeed, according to the demonstrated truth of evolution, the progress of the world instead of being toward uniformity is toward more and more variety everywhere.

It does not seem to have been God's intention to make things or people equal. The rose is not the equal of the oak, the violet is not the equal of the pine ; and, when we come to consider these human natures of ours, one man is

fine-looking and another is not, one man has remarkable brain power and the other is commonplace or even below that. One man has artistic tastes, love for the beautiful; another has not. One has a sense of humour, and another has not. One is touched by some sublime spectacle, and the other is not. There is every conceivable difference; and not only that, but every difference you can imagine in regard to qualities of character, goodness and badness, in regard to capacity for happiness, in regard to what are supposed to be the ordinary means and conditions for enjoyment,—as books, possessions, houses, cattle, horses, property of every kind,—every kind of variety that you can possibly imagine,—no two people alike. Why is this? How is it?

In certain Oriental religions that are being more or less adopted here in the West,—curiously enough as it seems to me,—they claim to explain this as a result of reincarnation brought out under the law of Karma. I never could see any help in this. People are not alike now. Were they always unlike? Were they unlike in the beginning? If they were, then He who made them so is responsible. Were they just alike at the beginning? If they were, and were circumstanced and conditioned just the same,

then of course they would have continued just the same.

Why, then, do they happen to differ? What began the difference? If they had been just alike at the first, and situated in just the same way, they would have kept on just alike. But they are not alike.

This 'reincarnation' only pushes the conception of the difficulty back behind the curtain of the past, where for a little while it is out of sight, but does not help it; it does not change it at all.

Ultimately,—we might as well face the matter frankly,—ultimately, the Author of this universe is responsible for all these human differences.

There is another thing that is frequently spoken of in connection with this that I can only refer to in a word, although it is very important. That is the law of heredity.

We have inherited so many differences and disabilities; and there are those who say that this, as evolution teaches it to-day, is just as bad as the old theological foreordination. It would be if the results were inexorable and if they were eternal; but under the law of cause and effect the results are not inexorable and the results are not eternal. We can work ourselves out of these conditions and up to the

finest that we can comprehend. Waiving, then, this aside as explaining it, do we need an explanation? Would we have absolute equality if we could?

Suppose Mount Blanc should become envious of Mount Everest, that one of the Himalayas that they tell us is the highest in the world. What claim has Mount Blanc to be as high as Mount Everest? Why would it be any better off or happier if it were?

If all the world, all the parts of the world, were just as high as any other part, there would be neither mountains nor valleys, but an unbearable monotony; and so in human life. Why should I be envious of Shakespeare? I confess I would like to have been able to write *Hamlet*; but what claim have I to the ability to write *Hamlet* any more than Shakespeare? I do not think either of us had any claim to it; but when the ability was given to Shakespeare instead of to me I was not wronged. Somebody had to have it. If anybody was going to, why not Shakespeare as well as anybody else? If all the people in the world were Shakespeares, who would read Shakespeare, who would act Shakespeare, who would enjoy reading Shakespeare? It would be again an unbearable monotony.

Why, we are childlike when we talk about this fact of inequality, that it is a moral difficulty that needs to be solved at all. It is that alone which makes the world a possible place to live in. Its infinite variety is its beauty, its ineffable charm.

And then, to touch a little more clearly on a point suggested in passing, pray tell me what claim you have on the universe, or what claim I have on the universe, for any definite amount of beauty, of power, of brilliancy or happiness, or anything else. Before I existed at all, I had no claim on existence, of course. Some Power brought me here, and gave me a certain amount of power and intelligence and moral character and the capacity for enjoyment. What was given me was an outright bestowal, and I have no claim on one single particle of it; and if this same Power has given twice as much to somebody else, that person has no merit for possessing it. Neither is he to blame for possessing it. Neither have I any right to be envious or jealous of him because he possesses it. So far as it goes, the good is an outright gift of the universe.

And then there are certain things that make up in some ways to those people who seem to lack. May I illustrate what I mean by a

concrete case? If the person that I have in mind reads this, she need not be troubled. She need not be afraid that somebody else knows the one to whom I refer.

I know a woman who is getting along in years. She is very near what young people speak of as old age. She has been sick and suffering a good many years of her life. She is poor, has been obliged to go without a thousand things that she would like to have had, and that most people somehow think they are wronged if they do not possess; but, for the life of me, I cannot pity her, because I know her. I have talked with her. She is one of the sweetest, truest, noblest women I know; and she told me in a conversation not a great while ago that the joy of her motherhood, the satisfaction, the delight that had come to her through being a mother, through the gift of her children and her love for them, was something that the universe could not buy.

I do not think a woman like that is poor. I do not think that we need to stop and waste any great amount of pity on her. I know a great many rich people, in beautiful homes, who would gladly exchange places if they knew her inner life.

So there are in every direction combinations that neither you nor I are able to weigh or measure. There are people on whom we waste compassion, who do not need it, because we choose to measure them by our present standards ; and there are people whom we envy who, if we knew it, are to be profoundly pitied. So God is not so very unequal as we are prone to imagine in the distribution of His gifts.

Do these considerations explain everything? No. I do not pretend that they do. I do believe, however, that they will help us, if we think them out carefully, to understand these problems a little better, to have a more intelligent conception of them, and give us some good reason for supposing that even those things that we cannot quite adequately explain at present are still capable of explanation in accordance with the wisdom and the goodness of our Father in heaven.

And one thing that helps is the demonstrated science of evolution. Here is an individual soul. He is going through a process of growth, of training, of development. At the present time, apparently, there is a period of retrogression. You may think he is going backward. Perhaps he is just now. I believe that every soul in this universe is doomed to

be trained, to be lifted, to be taught through sorrow, through anguish, through tears, through no matter what processes or experience, until it comes to that of which it is capable. And, when we look over the universe as a whole, we simply know—we simply know that things are not finished, that they are only in process.

Suppose a man who had never seen a finished ship should visit a ship-yard, and pronounce judgment on the framework of a vessel on the ways, laugh at the idea of that thing's ever going to sea or crossing the Atlantic. We should be justified in suggesting to him that perhaps he had better wait until it was finished before he pronounced judgment.

So we have no right to pronounce judgment on this scheme of human life until we are sure it is finished. We know that the universe all around us is simply in process, that it is moving towards some far-off,—shall we say finished event?—some far-off event anyway; and we trust it is to be finished. We trust also that it will prove divine. But this we know, that it is only in process.

You can go into an orchard in June. You bite an apple, and it is bitter. You say it is absurd to suppose that that is a good piece

of work. Wait until September or October, then judge it. So I believe that we have a right to trust faithfully the wisdom and the love of God in the working of this perfectly orderly universe in which we have found ourselves, and that we have no right to pronounce judgment here until we are sure it is complete. Wait then, and judge when you know.

CHAPTER IV

PAIN

THE unknown author of the Book of Revelation has written: "Neither shall pain be any more." This is from his vision of the ideal condition of things of which humanity from the beginning has cherished its dream.

We are to consider now the problem of pain as related to our faith in the goodness of the universal order. But first we need to understand the problem. What is the nature of pain? How much pain is there in the world? How much of it is unnecessary? How much of it is chargeable against the universe, and for how much are we ourselves responsible?

One of the main characteristics of this modern world of ours is the development of tenderness and sympathy, of the desire to help, such as in previous ages was not known; and this very sensitiveness, tenderness, sympathy of ours,—this is apt to exaggerate the facts of suffering.

Now, while I do not wish to minimise these

facts, it does seem to me that there is an equal danger in exaggerating them; because the great question which we wish to try to settle, if we can, is as to whether or not the fact of pain makes it unreasonable for us to believe in the goodness of God.

We wish, then, to bring as an indictment against that goodness only the necessary facts. It makes the problem more difficult of solution, if we suppose that the quantity of pain in the world is very much more than it actually is. Let us, then, at the outset go on a little search to see if we may discover something approximating the reality in this direction.

When we look down at the lower forms of life beneath us, we have come to think, under the teachings of modern science and the growth of this sympathy and tenderness to which I have referred, that it is only one bloody scene of warfare, suffering, death.

Tennyson, without meaning to, has taught us to think of

“Nature red in tooth and claw
With ravin.”

He has told us how this nature “shrieks” against the creed of belief in the divine goodness. Let us try to see what are the facts. Is

this lower life of the world a scene of suffering, or is it predominantly and almost exclusively a scene of happiness, at least of comparative freedom from pain? One or two illustrations. These must stand as suggestions of many others.

Every one who has made a study in this direction knows that there are certain very low forms of life, certain kinds of worms, that may be cut in two without hurting them; that is, instead of destroying the life of the worm, it simply results in there being two worms. Each half proceeds to develop itself until it goes off and leads a perfect life of its own. Then there are certain of the crustaceans which can lose a limb, have it torn off, perhaps in conflict with some enemy, without any apparent discomfort.

What would be the result if an arm or a leg were violently torn from a human body? Agony unspeakable not only, but almost inevitable death. In the case of these creatures that I have referred to there is apparently no suffering. At any rate, they proceed to grow another limb, and go about their occupations as though nothing had happened.

Even so highly developed an animal as the horse does not suffer anything like the amount

of pain we should suffer if we were placed in the same conditions. One fact alone seems to me to demonstrate this. I have known of a horse, having broken a leg just above the hoof and having been turned into a pasture, to go walking about on the broken end of his leg, crowding it down into the soil and pushing the flesh away from the bone, and nibbling the grass with apparent content.

That means, of course, that there was no suffering comparable for an instant to what would have been the case if it had been a man.

All this means merely this : that, in order that there should be keen feeling of any sort, there must be a highly organised nervous system, finely developed and complex in its development ; and the possibility of feeling either pain or pleasure keeps step with this nervous development.

On the part of these lower forms of life, then, there is no possibility of suffering that at all approaches that which we should endure in similar conditions. Does this mean that you are to be careless of the treatment of the lower animals? I point it out for a precisely opposite reason. We are careless, and we do inflict a large amount of needless suffering,

but if we are to reform the world in this direction we must deal with facts.

We must not press our sentimental feelings so far as to produce a reaction on the part of hard-headed and common-sense people. If we do, the result will be that, instead of joining with us to help put an end to this needless suffering, they will tell us we are creating facts in our imagination that do not really exist, and they will refuse to recognise that which really does exist, and so refuse to help us bring the cruelty to an end. We need, then, to try to find what is true.

Now, as we stand beside some brook on a spring morning and see the fish gliding through the water, we know, of course, that they eat each other. We know that they prey upon each other, as do the most of the lower forms of life. Shall we let that one fact, then, obscure the other evident fact, that their life is one of almost continuous fulness of happiness and joy, so far as they are capable of feeling happiness? There is no such possibility of suffering here as there would be in our case.

I remember once, when I was a boy, catching a fish which had a hook in its jaw. It had been there nobody knows how long—a year, two years perhaps ; but it gave it no apparent incon-

venience, and did not at all interfere with its biting at the next hook that came in its way. I speak of this simply to show that we must not exaggerate the possibility of suffering on the part of the lower forms of life. Some fair morning, when the sun has risen and all the woods are throbbing and thrilling with life, shall we obscure this scene of manifest and evident delight by remembering merely that birds prey upon each other, that sometimes the eagle destroys the sparrow, that there are cases of one kind pursuing another and feeding upon it ?

These are facts. The whole question of death I waive one side, because that will have to be treated by itself. They must all die, as we must all die. Granting the fact, then, that these lower forms of life must come to an end, I believe that there is no sort of question that they suffer less by the present method of pursuit and mutual destruction than they would by being left to grow old and die, probably of starvation because they were incapable of providing for their wants. I believe the present method is the kindly method ; and this is emphasised by a further consideration.

So far as we have been able to discover, it is doubtless true that the victim in the case of

pursuit and destruction fears and suffers so long as fear and suffering can help it to escape, but that, when the capture is effected, both the fear and suffering end,—practically end. If it is true of higher forms of life, much more is it likely to be true of the lower.

Mr. Livingstone, the great explorer, tells us that he was once captured by a lion; and he said that, though he expected instant death, the minute the lion's paw was on him there was no more fear, no more suffering, simply a wondering kind of curiosity as to what next, —a nerve paralysis as to ordinary pain. Mr. Whymper, the great Alpine climber, tells us that on a certain occasion he slipped in the Alps, and fell about two thousand feet. He struck, fortunately, in soft snow, and was not seriously injured; but he said that the prospect of death (which, of course, he immediately expected) had about it no terror, that, the moment he found himself going, it was simply a great wonder as to how it was going to end.

We have very good reason, then, to suppose that the creatures which are captured as prey and devoured by other creatures suffer so long as suffering can do them any good in helping their escape, but that beyond that it practically ends.

Let us take a step higher than the animal world. Consider, for a little, the lower grades of human life. We find sometimes our finished—as we imagine it to be—civilisation, our refined, sensitive modern world, looking down on the barbarous races, and thinking that God has treated them very harshly in that, having created them at all, He has not lifted them to some higher grade of existence by some sudden process.

Here, again, we look down upon these lower ranges of life, and import into these people our feeling, our sympathies, our way of looking at life, and judge that life as something dreadful because it would be something dreadful to us if we were suddenly thrust down among them and compelled to share it. But it is not dreadful at all to them. We do a similar thing in supposing that a man feels poor because he does not have as large an income as we have. As a matter of fact, possibly, his wages have been raised; and he feels rich. We should feel very poor if we had to live on his wages even after they were raised. But it is all a matter of comparison.

These lower races are comfortable. They have their own joys, their pleasures, but they are not capable of sympathising with and shar-

ing in the things that delight us. If we should by a bit of false philanthropy lift them to our level suddenly, and try to make them live our life, we should simply make them miserable. They wish to lead their own ; and they enjoy a higher kind only as they gradually grow into the ability to comprehend it, to feel it, to sympathise with it.

I do not think, then, that we are very wise if we spend our years in pitying the barbarous races of the world ; and still less are we wise if we make their condition a reason for charging the government of the universe with injustice because they do not share our joys.

Consider, again, what we sometimes speak of as the lower grades of life in our civilised country. You would not like to be forced to live in what we, perhaps without much judgment, sometimes speak of as the slums on the east or the west side. It would be a dreadful life to you ; and, as you go among these people, your sympathy or pity is called out. It ought to be to this extent at least, that you ought to be ready to do everything you can to help those that are willing to take a step forward and upward. You ought even to go farther, if you could. You ought to kindle in some one who does not care a desire for some-

thing higher and better, and then you ought to do what you can to meet and satisfy that desire. But do not imagine that the kind of lives they live are lives of unmitigated suffering.

Most of them are quite contented, quite happy, quite comfortable. Many are satisfied with the kind of tenements they live in. A great many of them who have migrated to this country, as poorly off as they seem to us to be, are doubtless very much better off than they were in the homes which they have left. So they are on the road to something better. Do not pity them to the extent of charging their condition as a count in the indictment of the goodness of the universe. They are so contented, many of them, that, if you offer them what we regard as a good deal better way of living, they will decline it. They prefer the kind of life they live to the cleanest, sweetest, and happiest life you can imagine in the country.

That means that this country life does not appeal to them; and you cannot suddenly put into their natures tastes and desires which are not there. These things are of slow growth. Recognise, then, the conditions which surround these people. Recognise the facts, and

try to estimate the problem as being simply what it is.

One other point. We sometimes pity the healthy poor,—the poor in the country, the poor boys growing up on farms, healthy in body, healthy in mind. I remember a picture,—a barefoot, ragged boy in a dusty country road, a carriage, and a span of horses, with people finely dressed, carelessly driving by. The people glance at the boy; and probably, if they care enough to think about it at all, it is with a sort of pity for this ragged urchin who knows nothing about their life. They look down upon him. He is a part of the problem of the government of the world. And yet that boy was living in countries and lands that perhaps they had never dreamed of. He created worlds, by his imaginative powers, that were full of splendour and wonder, full of hope. He saw and realised ambitions. He looked forward to things that he should carve out at some future day; and he was entirely unconscious that he needed any pity. He did not want any, surely. He was happy; and he lived in a wonder world that he himself had made.

Do not waste your time pitying the healthy, honest poor, those who can earn a living,

those who can make a little gain from year to year, those who can look forward dreaming of something better, those who through these experiences are working out character and achieving destiny.

The noblest men (many of them) that this country has produced have come out of boyhoods like that. They call for no sympathy; and they are not legitimately any count in any indictment against the goodness of the world.

I wish now to notice another phase of this subject. I have touched on some of the lower forms of life, as we ordinarily think of them,—some of the lower grades of human life; and now I wish to ask you to consider the kind of lives that we ourselves are leading, and what bearing they have on our problem. Are we as badly off as we think we are?

In the first place, I wish to say that I do not believe that any of you relatively ever suffered one-half as much as you think you have. We have ten or fifteen beautiful sunny days. We plan perhaps some excursion or some journey on the next day; and it storms. What do we say? Why, it always storms when we wish to do anything!

We remember so easily the things that go athwart our plans. We forget so easily the

long stretches of sunny, comfortable hours. Look back over your lives now, and try to make a fair estimate. How much pain have you really suffered as compared with the hours and days and weeks and months that have been comparatively free from pain ?

The pain in most of our lives is practically infinitesimal as compared with the comfort ; and yet there is a certain touch of egotism about us. If we have nothing else to be proud of, we try to be proud of the fact that we have suffered more than anybody else, or have had worse trials and troubles than anybody else. As a matter of fact, in the case of the most of us, it is not at all true.

Now I wish to suggest another line of thought. How much of the suffering that we have had to bear, how much of the pain, has been absolutely necessary ? How much of the world's pain have we a right to charge against the government of God, and how much of it are we ourselves responsible for ? Remember now we wish to get at the facts. We wish to find how much we have a right to charge against the goodness of the universe ; and we have no right to charge anything except necessary and inevitable pain.

How much of the pain that you and I have

suffered from, how much that the world suffers from to-day, is caused by vice, the breaking of God's laws? How much is caused by crime, the breaking of human laws? How much of the pain is caused by words that need not have been spoken? How much is caused by acts that need not have been done? How much of the pain that we suffer through illness is pain that might have been avoided?

We inherit illness sometimes from our fathers and mothers or a far-away ancestor; but a large part of the illness we suffer from we have brought upon ourselves,—eating, drinking, careless living, indulging this way and that, disregarding the laws of our bodies, determined to have the immediate indulgence, rejoicing in that,—not thanking anybody for that,—but, when the inevitable pain comes, crying out against the goodness of God.

How many mothers' hearts are broken that need not have been? How many wives are crushed needlessly by their husbands? How many husbands are made unhappy needlessly by their wives? How many children's lives are narrowed, embittered needlessly, by fathers and mothers? How many people are injured because we wish to get ahead a little faster than conditions legitimately permit us to in a

business way? How many times have you endeavoured to crush a competitor, no matter how much it cost him in suffering or wealth?

How many cruel wars,—the concentration of every vice, every crime, every conceivable evil, every imaginable pain, multiplied by the thousand and the tens of thousands in utterly needless wars! Shall we charge this against God? Do we dare to, as we look Him in the face, and think that we are disregarding every one of His laws in bringing about these horrible results that need not exist at all?

How much suffering do we bring upon ourselves through envy, through jealousy, through personal antipathies and hatreds, in every conceivable way?

Now what I wish to point out is this. That this needless pain we have not to explain at all as touching the goodness of God. I waive these entirely one side, when you come to me and present them as part of the problem impeaching the justice of the government of the world. I say they are no part of our problem. Bring to me only those things that are part of God's plan, that are inevitable in the nature of things, and that we have not needlessly created.

It is only these necessary pains that I attempt to explain, that I am trying to reconcile

with the goodness of God. I believe, then,—and I ask you to study each case by itself, and see if my statement be not true,—that every necessary pain in the universe is something to thank God for, instead of something needing to be explained.

Let me give you my reason. People curiously and illogically imagine all sorts of absurd worlds. I have not time to go into the matter at length ; but it is an absurdity on the face of it to suppose that God could create a perfectly good and happy world, and one perfectly wise, all in a minute, by sheer exercise of power. It is an absurdity in its mere statement. Think it out for yourselves. There are three or four points which, it seems to me, are conclusive in this matter. If we are to exist at all, then pain, a certain amount of it, the possibility of it, is inevitable. If you will choose existence, you must choose at least the possibility of pain along with it ; and God Himself cannot help it. It is not a question of power. It is a question as to possibility.

Think for a moment. A nervous system which is capable of exquisite pleasure must be equally capable of exquisite pain. It is capable of feeling ; and, if it can feel that which is agreeable, of course it can feel that which is

disagreeable ; and, unless a perpetually recurring miracle keeps you from making a mistake, then pain, of course, must come.

Can you imagine a piano, or a manufacturer of pianos making an instrument, that, rightly touched, shall produce exquisite harmony, that would not under a blunderer's hands produce a discord? The thing is absurd on the face of it. The possibility of pleasure, then, the possibility of feeling anything, carries with it the possibility of feeling pain.

And now, in the next place, it is absolutely necessary that we should feel pain if we are to continue to exist. If some power could bring into the universe a race of beings incapable of feeling pain, they would be wiped out of existence within a month. What would they do? They would be continually getting in the way of the moving forces of the universe ; and, unless it hurt so that they learned to keep out of the way, they would inevitably be crushed out of existence. Suppose it did not hurt to fall into the fire ; suppose it did not hurt to break an arm or a leg ; suppose it did not hurt to fall over a precipice ; suppose it did not hurt to be run over by an automobile in the street,—suppose that none of these things hurt, how should we learn to keep out of the way ?

The third point. There could be no consciousness if there were no pain. What do I mean? I mean that the basis of all consciousness is contrast. To illustrate: if all the world were of one colour, there would be no colour; and it would be as though we were blind. It is only because there are differences in things that we observe anything or note the distinction between one thing and another. If a chair and a table were precisely alike, who would ever know that there were such things as chairs and tables? If there were no such thing as pain, who would know that he had ever been happy? If from the very beginning we had been perfectly free from pain, we should not know it. We could not understand our condition. It would mean nothing to us. There would be nothing to rejoice in either. It is only against a background of pain that we know what pleasure means, that we can taste the ecstasy of numberless delights.

And now, in the next place, it follows that all necessary pain is protective, guardian in its nature. All the necessary pain in the world is a token of God's care and guarding, protecting love. All necessary pain is merely a sign-board set up,—“No Thoroughfare,”—“Dangerous Passing,”—warning us away from

things that would harm us. There is no other kind of necessary pain in the universe but that.

Did you ever note the fact that those parts of the body that are the most exposed and that need protecting most are the ones that are specially sensitive, capable of exquisite pain? Did you ever notice that in the lower forms of life pain is warning, protecting, almost always?

If a man is ill, he suffers pain. Nature is telling him that something is wrong, and that he must attend to it. If a man's illness reaches a point where it is hopeless, almost always the pain ceases. There is no use in warning any longer. So long as you are keenly sensitive to pain, there is hope for you. It means that the body is alive. It means that it is attempting to exercise its recuperative power.

So, everywhere in life where you find pain, it is God telling you that you must look out, that you are doing something wrong, that you are disregarding His laws. In society everywhere this is universally true. So that all necessary pain is inevitable in the nature of things not only, but is a token of God's tender, loving, fatherly care.

I quoted at the outset these words from the unknown author of the Book of Revela-

tion : " Neither shall pain be any more." When will that be true ? I do not believe in any other world where everybody is either suffering perfectly or enjoying perfectly, either the one or the other. I do not believe that the best person in the world the minute he goes into the other life is in perfect bliss, is where he will never know the shadow of pain again. I do not expect any such condition as that for a million years,—how many millions I do not know.

We are told that Jesus left the glory that he had in the other life, and came here to help us ; and must we not think of him as feeling an exquisite delight in helping, such as the harps and the singing could never have brought him ? If we are half men, we would rather suffer and so help as long as anybody else suffers and needs help. Heaven may stand open as long as it will. I do not expect to enter and stay there, even if I am permitted, so long as there is somebody outside that needs help, and so long as people are pouring, millions and millions every year, over into that life, half formed, half developed. How many years, how many ages, will it be before they need help no longer ?

It is the delight of sympathy and love to help

those that need it. So I expect no aimless lotus-eaters, Rasselas kind of felicity in any other life. I do not want it. I want the sense of effort, the sense of victory, the sense of overcoming. I want something to do; and so long as there are poor blind, wandering souls anywhere in the universe, the people who are Christ-like will be going out after them until all are gathered in. And even then, in the perfect consummation of all things, if we can imagine it, we should not know that we were happy except for our sacred memories of darkness and tears and heartache and pain.

CHAPTER V

LIFE'S INCOMPLETENESS

SOME years ago I asked a friend if he had ever seen any one who was content with himself and with his conditions. He said, "Yes, once, at ——," mentioning the name of a well-known asylum for the insane. He told me that he found there a number of persons who imagined themselves kings and queens, or famous persons of one sort or another, and that they seemed perfectly satisfied! This thought recalls to mind a saying of one of the most famous people in America. He told me within a year or two that, in his judgment, any man ought to be a pessimist by the time he was fifty. In other words, he believed that by that time a man would have found out how unsatisfactory the world is, how illusive are our visions, how poor is human life.

When I was a boy, I remember hearing father refer to a man who was famous then as being a millionaire,—though he would be lost to-day among them,—and he said that some

one asked him how much money a man would need in order to satisfy him. His reply was, "A little more." I have never seen any one yet who was really contented. Most persons, by the time they get well along in years, are apt to hold views and theories which are a little discouraging and disheartening. Read these two stanzas from the last canto of *Childe Harold*, giving you Byron's summing up of this thought :

"We wither from our youth. We gasp away,
Sick, sick; unfound the boon, unslaked the thirst;
Though to the last, in verge of our decay,
Some phantom lures, such as we sought at first,
But all too late ; so are we doubly curst.
Love, fame, ambition, avarice,—'t is the same ;
Each idle, and all ill, and none the worst.
For all are meteors with a different name,
And Death the sable smoke where vanishes the flame.

"Few, none, find what they love, or could have loved,
Though accident, blind contact, and the strong
Necessity of loving have removed
Antipathies,—but to recur erelong
Envenomed with irrevocable wrong.
And circumstance, that unspiritual god
And miscreator, makes and helps along
Our coming evils with a crutch-like rod
Whose touch turns Hope to dust,—the dust we all have
trod."

Not long ago I was looking over a little volume which the late Francis H. Underwood published concerning Mr. Lowell, soon after his death. He was referring to the period preceding the war when young men with fine consecration and high hopes gave themselves for the salvation of the country; and he says: "Generous and beautiful illusion! How dark would the world be to young hearts if they were to see it as after threescore years it appears to be!" This is Mr. Underwood's judgment of the outcome of life. I am glad to say that I do not at all agree with him.

I would like to suggest a question here for you to have in mind as I go on,—whether all these complaints, this pessimism, these dissatisfactions, this unsated hunger, this unslaked thirst, may not have some tremendous significance of which we have been apt to take no account. Meanwhile I wish to complete the picture of the complaints that men have made.

The poet Gray, in his famous ode *On a Distant Prospect of Eton College* gives voice to the commonly expressed opinion that childhood is the happiest time of life, the unfortunate thing about it being that the children do not happen to know that they are happy, which

makes it all the sadder. Looking at the children on the playground, he says :

“ Alas! Regardless of their doom,
The little victims play;
No sense they have of ills to come,
Nor care beyond to-day.

“ Yet, ah! why should they know their fate,
Since sorrow never comes too late,
And happiness too swiftly flies ?
Thought would destroy their paradise.
No more;—where ignorance is bliss,
’T is folly to be wise.”

This cry over the transitoriness and unsatisfactoriness of human life comes to us from every age and from every people, from every class and every condition of men and women. The things we have cherished most and cared for most, we somehow get the feeling, are the first to be taken from us. It is quite possible, let me suggest, that we may overlook a thousand things that are not taken away. But, when that one thing is taken, it makes so keen, sharp, painful an impression upon us that it seems to fill the whole of life! I must recall once more words which are so familiar that they have become trite, because people have found in them an expression of this feeling :

“ Oh, ever thus, from childhood's hour,
I 've seen my fondest hopes decay;
I never loved a tree or flower,
But 't was the first to fade away.
I never nursed a dear gazelle,
To glad me with its soft black eye,
But when it came to know me well,
And love me, it was sure to die.”

This seems to be the testimony of the ages. The glamour and the glory of life cover the world when we are young ; but they fade, and leave it very commonplace, as we get older. The classic utterance of that generally-believed-to-be-true idea, but which I do not believe to be true at all, is found in those wonderfully musical words of Wordsworth, in his ode on *Immortality*, where he tells us that we come from God in our infancy, trailing clouds of glory :

“ Heaven lies about us in our infancy!
Shades of the prison-house begin to close
Upon the growing boy;
But he beholds the light, and whence it flows,
He sees it in his joy;
The youth, who daily farther from the east
Must travel, still is Nature's priest,
And by the vision splendid
Is on his way attended;
At length the man perceives it die away,
And fade into the light of common day.”

I have asked you to note these various expressions that literature has given us of the common feeling about life, that you may see how they give voice to the feelings, the questionings, the murmurings, of your own hearts. They would not be so popular, we should not be so familiar with them, did they not *seem* to us to embody some great, important, universal truth.

Not only do the glory and beauty of the outer world fade and disappear, but our human relationships are so unsatisfactory, so full of change! How many of us have kept the friendships of our boyhood or girlhood, or of our youth? I have kept in fairly close personal touch with just one of the boys with whom I used to go to school. There are three or four or half a dozen others, boys and girls of my school-days, from whom I hear occasionally; but they are no part of my present life. We swore eternal friendship in those days; but it did not endure. It seems to be nobody's fault: the fault is in the constitution and course of things. One boy entered one business, and another, another; one settled in Maine, another went to California or to the South or to Europe. One course of study was followed by one, and something else by

another ; and so we grew apart. When we happen to meet, if we are fortunate enough to recognise each other, we look into the eyes of practical strangers. We do not see the persons we used to see in the years that are so far away.

When we turn to consider our life ambitions, how many of us have realised them? We dreamed, when we were boys, that we might be possible candidates for the Presidency. If not that, we were to make a record for ourselves in some way. Were we not all familiar with Longfellow's lines?

“Lives of great men all remind us
We can make our lives sublime,
And, departing, leave behind us
Footprints on the sands of time.”

We had ambitions to do something that should make the world notice us, make the world remember us. We would be great in some department of life. But the years have gone on ; and some of us are glad if we have been able to fill some position where we could earn a quiet, honourable, but obscure livelihood. And I suppose that, if any of us have attained anything like what we dreamed might be possible, we are not a bit satisfied

with it. It has become commonplace to us now. You remember that Campbell says :

“ 'T is distance lends enchantment to the view.”

A mountain top is clothed with a blue mantle of mystery and beauty ; but, if you climb the mountain, the blue mantle is not there. It is crowning some other peak far away. When we were boys, we were told that there was a pot of gold at the foot of the rainbow. It looked to be only over in the next field or on some near-by hill ; but, when we got there, the end of the rainbow was always somewhere else. We never reached the realisation of the thing that we dreamed.

I remember a famous woman, who was distinguished on two continents as a physician. She had lived a rather lonely life, devoting herself to her profession. In her old age she confessed sadly to a friend that she found very little satisfaction in her life. She was glad for the good that she had been able to do ; but she said, with a sigh, that that woman was fortunate who could find love and a home and a child rather than distinction in any career.

You write a book. By the time you have written it, it is commonplace to you, however

remarkable it may be to those who read it for the first time. So any position that a man attains loses the wonder and the glory of it by the time he gets there ; and he is always looking ahead, and thinking of something else not yet realised. That seems to be a part of the doom that is laid upon the kind of people that we are.

Consider the case of the man who has attained his ambition in the direction of wealth. I think it is wonderfully fortunate for a man to have at least a little more money than he needs to live on, in case of illness or a thousand things which may happen,—it adds so much to his comfort, his ease, his sense of independence ; but I have never yet found a man who had become so wealthy that he was satisfied and content. I remember a conversation with a great builder in the West, who had become wealthy. He started as a day labourer, a carpenter. He said: "I used to have to go to work before I had time to read the newspaper ; and I thought it was a great deprivation. But now that I have all that I can desire, now that I can take my ease, can get up when I please, do as I please without need of keeping hours, I look back as the time of my greatest happiness to the days when I

started out in the morning with my dinner-pail."

I was talking once with a railroad president. He had become dyspeptic, nervous, and could not sleep; and he said to me: "The man I envy most is the baggage-master at some way station in the country. He has salary enough to live on and be comfortable; and he has no care, no burden, no responsibility. He can eat, and digest his food, and go to sleep at night without caring what happens before morning."

Do you not see the principle that lies here? If we are *souls*,—if I say,—then we cannot be satisfied with *things*, no matter what they are. Jesus taught a profound and significant truth when he said, "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesses." A *man's* life, mind you! If he is a man, and if there be within him a great range of faculty, of capacity, above the mere ability to touch and handle, how do you expect him to be satisfied, when these things are unfed? That is the great truth which we need to become familiar with,—that a man must feed his manhood. If you do not cultivate and train and use these powers, they atrophy and die and become of no avail.

A man's ideals are never attained. That is one of the most significant things concerning this marvellous human nature of ours. If you find a man satisfied with himself and what he has accomplished, you will always find a type that is low, undeveloped. The higher the man, the less satisfied he is. A highly trained artist, master of his art, master of his hands, master of his materials, is always his own severest critic. He can never do anything which is quite satisfactory to himself. His ideal always outruns his attainment. This is as true in the direction of goodness as anywhere else. There are certain persons whom we have decided to honour, as we think, by calling them "saints." They are thus distinguished for goodness and for service. But, if you read their biographies or confessions, if they have left any, what do they say about themselves? They regard themselves as anything but saintly. What has Paul to say of himself? "Not as though I had already obtained [attained], or were as yet made perfect." We think of him as one of the greatest souls of the world, set apart by his goodness and consecration. He talks about himself as being the very "chief of sinners." He was sensitive to the imperfections, which he had learned

to discern, but of which others perhaps would take no note. The more finely cultivated the ear of the musician, the more sensitive it becomes to the slightest discord. So we never attain our ideal in any department, in any direction, in human life.

How is it with the truth-seeker? As a matter of fact, we are proud of the achievements of the modern world. We talk about the wondrous advance in human knowledge; and yet there never was a time in the history of the world when wise men felt so utterly overwhelmed with the impossibility of thoroughly knowing anything. Suppose you are on board a ship at sea. The fog has closed down upon you, so that you can hardly see your hand before your eyes. You go on deck, and by and by the fog begins to thin and lift a little. You can see half the length of the ship. Gradually you can see its whole outline. Then there are glimpses of the sea on every hand; and the fog lifts and lifts, and retreats and retreats. The area of the visible and the knowable grows; but the area of the invisible and unknowable keeps step with that growth. The more the fog recedes, the wider the horizon of that which you cannot discern.

You are in a valley at the foot of a mountain. The world is very small down there; and you can see the whole of it practically. But begin to climb the mountain and you see more. Your vision enlarges, the range of your knowledge grows, and the range of the unknown grows also. So man learns the lesson after a while that, the more he knows, the less he knows.

Start with a grass-blade, and begin to ask questions about it, and, before you know it, you are face to face with the infinite and the utterly insoluble. We become used to things that we see and touch every day; and we fancy that we know them. We have labelled them; but how much do we really know? I lift my hand—how? I do not know. Nobody in the world knows how I am able to do so simple a thing as that. I look before me, and see your faces. How? I do not know; nobody knows. There is nothing that we know thoroughly and completely. So men can get discouraged sometimes, and think the universe is a puzzle to which there is no answer. In one sense, it is fortunate that this is true. Suppose I could solve to-day all the riddles of the universe; what would it mean? It would mean that I had read my death warrant. There would be

nothing more to live for. The only rational basis for belief in the immortal life is in the fact that we can study and grow and advance forever and forever, and never be through. There will always be something fresh, something beyond, something piquing our curiosity, something leading us on. And so it is that the greatest men of the world have been the humblest. You remember the saying of Newton in his old age, that he was like a little child playing on the seashore. He had been able to discover now and then a pebble brighter than his fellows had found; but the whole great ocean of truth lay still unexplored before him. You recall that wise saying of Lessing, that, if God were to hold in one hand the truth and in the other the privilege of seeking for truth, and permit him to take his choice, he would say: O God, the truth is for Thee alone. Give me the privilege and the joy of search.

There is another thought with which I have played sometimes. I have thought that it might be fine if the generations which had preceded us could have left for us, not merely the results of their study and their work, but their trained faculties and powers as well, so that we might start with the advantage, not only of what they had accomplished, but of

what they had become. And yet, when I look at the idea, however alluring it may seem, I detect that it would be folly. In the first place, these people who have gone, as I believe, to another life, want their own training, their faculties and powers ; and they cannot afford to leave them behind for us. Then there is another consideration. Whatever is simply *given* to us, without any effort on our part, fails of its mission. We need not merely the accomplished results ; we need the culture and training which come with the searching and the striving and the effort. It is much better for us that we should strive, and grow in the striving, even if we do not attain, than that we should have the finest things in the universe laid at our feet, leaving us undeveloped and uncultivated children, because we have escaped the pain and the effort, the toil and the study, and so have lost the development which comes from this onreaching and outreaching after the things that are before us.

I have now at some length gone over a great many departments of life, and shown how incomplete, how unsatisfactory they are. We never get through, we never attain, we never find the place where we can say, Now we are satisfied ; let us sit down and rest. But there

are a few other considerations which seem to me to abate the fault we are inclined to find. I wish to call attention to a few of them.

The old Roman Stoic, Seneca, has given us a suggestion that may serve our need. He says,—I give only his thought : When we are finding fault because things are taken away from us, is it not well for us to remember the good of their having been given to us ? While we have things, are they not good ? A beautiful morning,—was it not beautiful ? A magnificent sunrise,—was it not just as magnificent as though it had lasted all day long ? Should we have thought it was quite as beautiful if it had lasted all day long ? A lovely experience that we have gone through,—was it not lovely ? Suppose a friend takes you for a whirl in the country in his automobile. You had no claim to this pleasure : it was given you outright as a joy, a fine experience. Instead of being grateful for it, after the drive is at an end, will you find fault with the owner because he did not give you the machine ? Will you find fault because the drive was not longer ? This is what we are doing all the time. We receive good things, for which we have no claim ; and then, the minute they are removed, we begin to grumble and find fault because we cannot

keep them, instead of being grateful that we have had the blessed experience.

Then there is another consideration. Have we really lost the things we have had, and which we think have passed away? Have you lost your childhood? Have you lost the friends of your childhood? Have you lost some blessed experience that you passed through last year? Have you lost the early years of your married life? Have you lost the joy of seeing the little children round your feet, because they have grown up? Are these things lost, or is it not rather true that all the things that are really precious, that are important to us, have become a part of us? They are wrought into the very fibre of our being. They are not only shadowy images, memories; they have made us over. We are different men and women from what we should have been but for these. And so we keep them. I do not believe that, as a matter of fact, we ever really lose anything important to our lives.

And then there is another consideration. If we lose the poetry, the beauty, the brightness, of life, let us ask ourselves seriously if it is not our own fault. The faculties which we do not cultivate become atrophied; they become as if they did not exist. The world with

which these faculties bring us into contact may seem to us no longer to exist ; and yet it may be all round us, touching us on every hand, just as the glory of the world may encompass one who is blind, or the music of the world one who is deaf. If we are really anxious to come in contact with these beautiful, poetic, romantic, lovely, spiritual things, we must train and keep alive the faculties and powers that enable us to appreciate them. If we do not, is it God's fault that we think the world is poor, or is it our own fault, if we have kept alive only those things that bring us in contact with the grossest, the most material, the most commonplace parts of human life? Shall we, then, charge God with having made the world poor?

There is another suggestion worthy of our thought and attention. We are on a journey in this world ; and we should not like it if we were stopped, any more than we like it because we have to go on. We are made up of a kind of material that is bound not to be satisfied either way ; and it is a blessed thing that we are. Whether we like it or not, then, we are on a journey. We are travelling from childhood to manhood ; and the question is, Is it wiser for us to keep our eyes fixed on some

far-off, alluring end, and in the meantime to be dissatisfied because we are not there, or to live by the hour, the day, to appreciate and rejoice in the beauty, the good, the glory, as we go along? Suppose I am starting for Rome or Constantinople or Cairo. I am to stop at a great many smaller places by the way. Now what shall I do? Shall I think about Rome all the time and the glorious day when I shall arrive there, and in the meantime be impatient with delay? or shall I say: In this small place where I must pause there is a cathedral, or a modest church, or a picture gallery, or a public hall, or a fine bit of landscape, a river, a waterfall, something worth seeing. Shall I see the beauty of these things as I go along? Shall I rejoice in every phase of this journey? Is not that, after all, the rational way to live? And yet the most of us, if we have some desirable thing in the future that we are striving after, keep our attention on that so continuously that we are dissatisfied and fault-finding till we get there. And, when we get there, what? Why, we have made ourselves restless, dissatisfied, and fault-finding by the way; and so that is the kind of person we are when we arrive. We see everything from the point of view of such a person, so we

are never satisfied with anything. It seems to me that the rational way for us is to live by the day.

Now one other consideration. Would we have things different? Is there not some charm in their frailty, in the fact that they change and fade so speedily? Would you care for a rose quite so much if it would keep its colour and its shape for a year or for ten years? Is not the very frailty one element which makes it seem so beautiful, so desirable? Are there not experiences of love and friendship that get their finest edge and quality from the fact that they are fleeting? Does the mother not love the little baby all the more because she knows that every single day the baby is changing and will soon outgrow its babyhood? Because we are haunted with the shadow of illness and death and the unknown, do we not clasp in our arms a little more tenderly those whom we love, and whom we know we cannot always keep just as they are? Would you have it otherwise? Perhaps in some hours we would. But I question whether God is not wiser than we. What does growth mean? It means *outgrowth* of course. It means leaving things behind, because we have outgrown them. Oliver Wendell Holmes, in one of his humor-

ous but pathetic poems, tells us of a man who wanted to be a boy again; but, when you came to question him closely, he wanted to keep his own boys, his wife, and the achievements of his manhood. He was not ready to give these up in order to be a boy again. But you cannot have your own children and the wife and the home and the achievements of manhood until you have outgrown being a boy. That is what life means everywhere. If you are to become something more, something better, something higher, something finer, it means that you leave things behind you. You remember how Paul expressed this thought: "When I was a child, I thought as a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child; but now that I have become a man, I have put away childish things." It is lovely to see a little boy with his cart or a little girl with her doll; but it is one of the most pitiful things when a boy stops growing, and after he gets to be the age of a young man still pushes his cart, or when a little girl old enough to be a mother to her own child has not outgrown the period of playing with the doll. Growth, then, means outgrowing; and we have no right to find fault because we must outgrow our present conditions.

Note, then, the marvellous significance of this fact that we are never satisfied, that we are haunted by unattainable ideals. What does it mean? It means that this present world is not large enough for us. If it were, we should read our doom right here. Suppose some scientist should discover a dog or a horse who was restless, haunted by an ideal never attained: would he not know this animal to be something different from the ordinary dog or horse, capable of outgrowing his present condition? If you are in the presence of a plant that is bursting through the roof of a hot-house, you know it was not intended for a hot-house. It must be planted elsewhere. If a man who had never seen the ocean should go to Bath, Me., and see a ship on the stocks, even supposing he had never known of a body of water larger than a river, he would say: There must be somewhere more water than I have ever seen, or the man who designed this boat is an idiot. Escape the logic, if you can. This very fact that lives here are incomplete, that they are growing, means that there is idiocy in the plan of the universe, or else that this world, magnificent as it is, is unfolding. It is a chrysalis that you and I are going to burst and escape, unfolding wings, and finding

ourselves in a place that is larger, that will make room for us.

We have discovered at last the theory, and we have demonstrated the science, of evolution; and this chimes right in with this whole conception. It means that nothing is finished, that the world is not old nor weary. It means that the forces of creation are as fresh to-day as on any imagined morning when the stars sang together. It means that we are *en route*, that we are going somewhere, that the universe is going somewhere, and that the Power which is working through this universe is unexhausted; that it is lifting, pushing, leading, and that it is greater than we can conceive. The material universe overwhelms us as being infinite, but the Power manifested in it is mightier than it; for it is lifting it, unfolding it, leading it on and on. So when I see a man like Alexander conquering the ancient world and crying for more worlds to conquer; or a man like Napoleon, with his gigantic designs, dying caged on an island, but feeling in him infinite capacities; when I see Carlyle complaining, dissatisfied, feeling that there are possibilities in him that there is no place here to unfold,—then I feel sure that “eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into

the heart of man, the things that God hath prepared."

Victor Hugo recognises this limitation, but he also has the magnificent outlook :

Man is an infinite little copy of God : that is glory enough for man. I am a man, an invisible atom, a drop in the ocean, a grain of sand on the shore. Little as I am, I feel the God in me, because I can also bring forth out of my chaos. I make books, which are creations. I feel in myself that future life. I am like a forest which has been more than once cut down : the new shoots are stronger and livelier than ever.

I am rising, I know, toward the sky. The sunshine is on my head. The earth gives me its generous sap ; but heaven lights me with the reflection of unknown worlds. You say the soul is nothing but the result of bodily powers. Why, then, is my soul more luminous when my bodily powers begin to fail ? Winter is on my head, and eternal spring in my heart. Then I breathe at this hour the fragrance of the lilacs, the violets, and the roses, as at twenty years ago. The nearer I approach the end, the plainer I hear around me the symphonies of the worlds which invite me.

It is marvellous, yet simple. It is a fairy tale, and it is historic. For half a century I have been writing my thoughts in prose and verse, history, philosophy, drama, romance, tradition, satire, ode, and song. I have tried all ; but I feel I have not said a thousandth part of what is in me. When I go down to the grave, I can say, like many others, I have finished my day's work ; but I cannot say I have finished my life. My day will begin again the next morning. The tomb is not a blind alley : it is a

thoroughfare. It closes on the twilight to open on the dawn.

If man is a soul, if he is a child of God, if he has in him infinite possibilities, what would you have? Is not this age-long and universal cry of dissatisfaction just what we ought to expect?

CHAPTER VI

MORAL EVIL

I WONDER what my readers would think of me if I should begin by saying that I believe this to be the best conceivable of worlds? At any rate, let us make that suggestion, and then we will see where we come out.

It is a sad scene that confronts us as we look over human society. Aside from all other things, it is sad because of the various and terrible manifestations of moral evil,—everywhere cruelties, hatreds, anger, envies, jealousies; people injuring each other; people trying by unfair means to overreach each other; families broken, husbands and wives separate, fathers and mothers and their children at enmity, brothers and sisters jealous or envious of each other or hating each other; law courts and jails in every direction, and this means crimes, assaults, personal injury, robbery, murder. And then, every little while, nations in bitter conflict with each other, carrying on devastat-

ing wars which are in themselves the summing up and concentration of all conceivable moral evils. It is a sad scene.

The primitive people of the earth believed in a great many gods, some of them good and some of them bad ; and they easily explained this condition of affairs by referring the bad things to the bad gods and the good things to the good gods. But it was not long before that state of thought was outgrown. There is one of the great religions of the world which has for its underlying assumption an idea which would seem to be able to explain all these contradictory facts. Zoroaster taught his followers that there were two gods, the god of light and of goodness and the god of darkness and of evil, and that these almost equally matched gods were in age-long conflict, and that in this fact is to be found an adequate explanation of all the sins and sorrows of earth. It is but fair to Zoroastrianism to say that, if we assume the truth of its creed, it would explain the difficulty, only it would be an assumption ; and the world is getting tired of assumption, and wants facts, if they can be discovered. There is another thing to be said for Zoroastrianism. It was kinder than Christianity, because its followers taught that this

conflict would some day come to an end, and that even the bad god himself would be converted and redeemed, and that this world and all worlds would be full of happiness and peace.

There is another explanation that is worth our noting for a moment in passing. The old Greeks and Romans taught that in the beginning of things there was no sorrow, no sin. They told us of a Golden Age; but it came to an end, and, curiously enough, according to one of the great legends, it came to an end through the agency of a woman, as was supposed to be true among the Hebrews. Prometheus had stolen the sacred fire from heaven, and given it to man, so that he might begin the process of civilisation. Zeus was angry, whereupon he created Pandora, a woman to whom all the gods had given gifts, whence her name; and he brought her as a present to Epimetheus, the brother of Prometheus. Although Prometheus had warned his brother not to accept any present from Zeus, he did accept her; and she opened the fatal box in which all the evils that have since afflicted the world had been confined, shutting the lid down just in time to retain hope, the only thing that has never quite left the human

heart. This is their explanation of the old mystery as to the beginning of moral evil in the world.

Let us now turn to the Hebrew and Christian conception ; for they are substantially the same. The Hebrews assumed,—note that I use the word *assumed*,—the Hebrews assumed that the world was created perfect. This story of the fall of man was not originally in Hebrew history. It came later into their life and became part of their religion. Some of its features were borrowed probably from Babylonian and Persian sources. The early prophets knew nothing about it ; but it came at last to be a fundamental idea in the Hebrew religion and theology. God created the world perfect ; and then an enemy, a malign power, invaded this fair world, and destroyed its innocence, and brought in its train all conceivable ills.

Christianity adopted this belief of the Hebrews, accepting their assumption. Why did they assume it ? There is no proof available in the history of the world that any such thing ever occurred. Indeed, there is to-day demonstrable proof to the contrary. Why did the Hebrews accept any such story ? For the simple reason that they believed that God was

perfectly wise and perfectly good, and therefore He must have made the world perfectly good, to start with. This is an assumption like that of Plato. Plato taught that the perfect figure was the cube ; and so he said the universe was a cube. Why ? Did he ever study the universe to find out ? Did he ever collect any evidence that such was the fact ? It never seems to have occurred to him even to understand the scientific method, much less to follow it. Because the cube, in his opinion, was a perfect figure, therefore God must have made the universe a cube ; and because of this assumption he accepted it as a fact.

In precisely the same way the Hebrews assumed that God, being wise and good, must have made the world a perfect place, to start with, and that it must have been some enemy of His who invaded this perfect condition of things, and brought about the ruin of the Creator's work.

Now let us, in the light of what we know to be true to-day, look at the facts. Before doing that, however, let me say that it has always been an amazement to me that the brains and heart and conscience of Christendom for so many centuries could have been paralysed into the acceptance of such a theory as that

which lies at the basis of our theological system. It has no proof. It is unjust, it is grossly immoral, and yet Christendom has assumed it, because it has accepted the tradition that it has been divinely and authoritatively revealed, and so must be bowed to as a mystery, however horrible it might seem.

Before commenting on the explanation of the existence of moral evil, let us turn, and consider a few facts,—facts that have been scientifically investigated and demonstrated in these modern times.

With different modifications the theory of evolution is now accepted by every competent mind in the civilised world. What does that mean? It means that since the far-off beginning—I say beginning, because I do not know how else to express my thought, for we can conceive of no beginning—there has been gradual growth, from the simple to the complex, from the lower to the higher, from the poorer to the relatively better. That is, the universe has been growing. Everywhere there has been struggle, and everywhere those forms which have been best adapted to their surroundings have survived; and under this process what has taken place? All the best things that the world knows have come into being.

Beautiful grasses sprang up. From some simple growths have been developed all the grains and cereals of the world. Under this process of struggle and survival the myriad forms of insect life have been developed, beauty beyond expression, swiftness, power, life in its various forms. Then this mysterious life force has climbed up into the birds which fly in the air and lodge in the branches of the trees; and by this process of struggle and competition, the survival of the fittest, there have come swiftness of wing, beauty of feather, every gorgeous colour, and the mystery and marvel of song. All the beautiful forms of bird life have been developed through this process. Among the animals, in the same way, power, strength, and wonderful forms of all kinds have come to be.

Then, at some period of which we can only guess, man appeared, the lowest form of man. But, when man appeared, something very striking and significant happened. What was it? Conscience was born, a recognition of the distinction between right and wrong. And the coming to birth of conscience our theology has referred to as "the fall"! It is the ascent of man that we must consider henceforth, and which we must make the corner-stone of the

future theology of the world. When, then, man appeared, conscience appeared.

Now note. The old tradition said that evil came into the world just at that time. But evil in one sense had always been in the world. Death had always been in the world. The animals had always been fighting and devouring each other. Envy, jealousy, anger, hatred, assault, murder, warfare, all of these things that we have come to think of as moral evils, were in existence from the beginning; but they were not evil. Why? Because conscience did not exist. There was no recognition of the distinction between right and wrong, between lower and higher, between worse and better. And then these things, in this lower animal world, were not evil. They were relatively good. Consider a moment. Death must exist, or else these creatures that came into being must have lived forever. If they lived forever, the world would soon have been so full that no more could have come into existence. That would have meant that only a relatively few could have tasted the sweetness and wonder of life. But if they kept dying off and new ones were being born, then countless myriads could taste this wonder, this sweetness, this joy, of existence.

But do you think it is an evil to have them devour each other? Think of the alternative. They must either die or live forever. If they die what we call a natural death, the chances are that they would suffer many times more than by being preyed on by their fellows. Sudden death is less to be feared than death through lingering disease and starvation. Think what a picture the latter would present. It would cover the world with the putrid, disease-breeding forms of myriads of creatures. Under the present system, nothing of that sort occurs. And then, as far as we have been able to carry investigations, we are practically certain that in almost all cases there is a natural anæsthetic that precedes death, so that suffering is reduced to a minimum.

So in this lower animal world, before man appeared, all the feelings, all the actions, that we have come to think of as evil, were in existence ; but there was no moral evil. There was just the kind of world, the kind of life, which was inevitable if creatures were to live a limited life, and then die. That is all.

Now note again that, when man came, conscience came. What sort of change did this make? It meant that from that point there was to be a moral struggle, that man was to

begin to recognise the difference between the lower and higher, between the animal and the human, between the human and the angel, and that he was to strive for mastery over the lower ; that he was to climb up into the higher ranges of thought and feeling and action. It meant that moral perfection was to be striven after up the ages.

Now let us look at man. Is there anything essentially evil in man ? No. This whole idea of essential evil, or evil as a thing, as a substance, is nonsense. There is no such thing in the universe. There is no original sin conceivable or possible. As you look a man over from head to feet, there is nothing in him that is necessarily wrong ; not a passion, not a desire, not a faculty, not a power, that may not be entirely right and good. Man hungers for pleasure. Why ? Why not ? Is it wicked to be happy ? As to whether or not it is wrong, depends entirely upon what this hunger leads him to do, what kind of pleasure he seeks, whether he is willing to take it at the expense of the welfare of some one else. A man is ambitious, desires to make a name for himself. What of it ? Is that wrong ? It depends again entirely upon the price he is willing to pay for his name. Ambition may be one of the manliest, noblest,

most splendid things in the world, or it may be a danger, a most incalculable evil. It all depends. What is envy? Envy is only emulation gone astray. You see some one who is doing some fine thing; and you emulate his example. So far, it is right and good; but you can carry it so far as to make it an evil, but in itself it is not necessarily an evil. Hatred; is that wrong? It depends on what you hate and what it leads you to do. Anger; is that wrong? Again that depends upon why and with whom you are angry and what that anger leads you to do. A man kills another. What is that? It may be murder, it may be an accident, it may be heroism. It all depends. There is nothing in the mere act which is necessarily either good or evil. So you can go through the entire list of possible human feelings and activities, and find that it depends on circumstances whether they are evil or good. There are just two possible ways by which men can do wrong,—*just two*. You can pervert your faculties and powers, and use them in wrong ways, or you can carry them to excess. You can not possibly do wrong in any but one of these two ways.

So this question of moral evil means simply that men have evolved from lower conditions

of animal life, have started out on this age-long ascent, climbing from brute to angel, led and lifted by the ideal of the divine.

But the scene, people say, is horrible, and the actions are horrible. Yes, many of them are. But let us see if there is any possible way of avoiding this sort of process. If men are to live at all, if they are to grow morally at all, is there any other kind of world in which the process might be carried on? I have spent my leisure a good many times for a good many years in trying to think of conceivable worlds. I am going to suggest the result of that thinking.

What possibly might God have done? He might have stopped the world's growth just before conscience appeared. What would that have meant? It would have meant the perpetuity through all time of all these that we have come to think as evil thoughts and evil things and evil beings. No conscience being in existence, of course there would have been no attempt to outgrow and leave behind these things that we have come to think of as evil. That would have meant that man should not have appeared on the earth at all.

There is another conceivable theory. God might have created us automatons. A skilful mechanic makes a watch, makes it so nearly

perfect that it runs day by day and week by week with the most marvellous accuracy ; but the watch has nothing to do about it. It is simply the result of forces of which it is not conscious ; and it produces a result which is useful, but of which it knows nothing.

Thus God might have created men and women so that they would run like machines, keep perfect time, and make no mistakes. But should we like to be one of that kind of creatures, even to avoid the ills of the world ? Should we like to live in a world of that sort ? There could be no ideals, no efforts, no strivings, no conquests, no victories, no high, fine attainments.

Of what other kind of world can we think ? I can imagine that we might be just the kind of creatures that we are, and that God might prevent the existence of actual evil by interfering all the time. Whenever I am inclined to do something wrong in the world, an angel might touch me on the shoulder and interfere with the carrying out of my design. Every time I stumbled and was going to fall, he might catch me in his arms and hold me up. Actualised evil might conceivably be prevented in that way. But do we not see what that would mean ? It would mean the negation of

all character, of all growth, of all self-control, of all becoming, of all achievement. Men and women living in a world of that sort would be in a perpetual nursery, undeveloped, and with no possibility of development, unable to learn anything, never becoming anything. Would you like to have God interfere all the time in that way, even to prevent you from doing wrong and having to pay the suffering? I would not. I think the mere naming of theories like these puts them out of court.

Now there is another theory; and this, I think, is the commonest and most popular of all. Hardly a week goes by that some one does not say to me that he wonders that God did not make the world after this fashion. That is, God might have made men and women perfectly wise and perfectly good, to start with; and then, of course, there would have been no moral evil and no wrong. But if men and women had always been perfectly wise and good, they never would have found it out, they never would have known that they were good. If you never tasted anything but a certain kind of sweet all your life, you would not know that there was such a thing as sweet. You would not know anything about it. The basis of all knowledge of this sort is compari-

son and contrast. So, really, this whole conception, when we stop to think of it, is absurd. There would have been no consciousness of battles fought and of victories won. There would have been no sense of achievement, none of the joys of attainment. If you look at it a little closer, you will see that it is absurd in the very terms in which it is stated. I make the assertion, and challenge reasonable contradiction, that God could not create a perfectly wise being at once. He could not create a perfectly good being at once.

I know that men have assumed that there are a lot of angels in heaven who are perfectly wise and perfectly good. I venture to doubt their existence. Nobody has ever seen them. I believe the only kind of angels in the other life are those who have lived through the kind of life we are living, and have become angels as the result of moral and spiritual development. What do we mean by wisdom? We mean the result of experience. A man makes mistakes, goes wrong, and at last learns ; and in this way he becomes wise. To say that a man is wise who has not been through any experience of that sort is to use a word without attaching to it any rational meaning, because wisdom means the summed-up results of experience.

Precisely a similar thing is true of goodness. To say that a man is good means that he has wrought out goodness as the result of trying, of failure, of falling and of rising again. And neither he nor we could know that he was good unless through experience of the opposite. I venture to say that this conception of the possibility of a perfect world from the start is absurd on the face of it, is an impossible thing in the very statement of its terms.

Can we think of any other kind of world? I cannot. And now what is the outcome? It means, in my judgment, that just this kind of world we are in here, where there is bitterness and heartache, and envy and jealousy, and strife and falsehood, and robbery and wrong of every kind, is the best conceivable world. If we were to stay just where we are, no. But what does this human life mean? It means a field for struggle, a moral and spiritual gymnasium through which we are to be developed and trained. Out of this experience and training look back and see what magnificent souls have come. What tender, true, and devoted women! What noble, sagacious, and magnificent men! And has it not been worth while, when you remember that this is not a permanent condition as touching any one individual soul? Evil

would indeed be inexplicable, would be without any defence in the court of good morals, if it were to be permanent, so far as any one soul or any one group of souls is concerned.

If there are to be millions of people who are to go to hell and never escape from it, then there is no possible way of justifying the universe and of pleading successfully for God. If any one soul, the poorest and meanest that has ever lived, is to go to hell and stay there forever, then there is no way of defending God or of justifying the universe. But evil may be eternal for all I know. It would not trouble me *if* I believed it. But *if* it is only a condition,—a process through which souls pass on a journey to the highest, though there may be in some world, in some part of space, this condition of evil and struggling and development always existing; *if*,—and nobody can deny this *if*; they can doubt it if they please, but, until they can prove that it is not true, they can bring no lasting charge against the justice of God,—*if* evil is only a process; if this life is only a school; if we are learning how to live here; if the thing going on is what Browning refers to as “the culture of a soul,”—then I believe that the proposition is quite defensible that this is the best conceivable of

worlds. If every soul is to learn some time what is right and what is wrong, is to learn to choose the right and turn away from the wrong because it means life and welfare and happiness for all souls ; if, I say, every individual is to learn that lesson some day,—then may not the process be amply and grandly justified? We have come from the lower forms of life. We reached the point where conscience was born, and now we are fighting our way through and up, and leaving behind us the passions of the animals below us. We are climbing up into self-control, climbing up into brain and heart and soul, climbing up into the life of children of God.

I do not know of any other kind of world in which moral training would be possible. Moral training means freedom, the ability to choose evil or choose good. It means learning evil by knowing the results of it ; it means learning good by knowing the results of that ; and it means that ultimately every man will know that it is better to be right, and will freely choose it. And so he will come to himself as a developed and conscious child of God.

If we are to live at all, and if we are to pass through the experience of evil on the way to

moral goodness, then I cannot think of any better field for the training and achievement.

If these things are so,—and I believe they are scientifically demonstrable as true,—then the temporary existence of moral evil as a phase in the development of each individual soul ceases to be one of life's dark problems; and it is perfectly consistent with our loving trust in the wisdom and the goodness of our Father, God.

CHAPTER VII

DEATH

I TAKE it there is no other fact in the world that has made it harder for people to believe in the goodness of God than this of death. There are certain ideas which have come down to us from the past, which we have received as unquestioned traditions, which have become so thoroughly part of us that even after we have intellectually repudiated them we instinctively assume their truth. Theology has taught us from the beginning of Christian history that death is the result of human sin, that it came into the world on account of human sin, on account of man's disobedience to the command of God. We instinctively think of it as a token of God's anger. Having believed that God made the world perfect in the first place, men came to regard death as the result of an invasion of this beautiful world of ours by some malign power from without, as the work of an enemy of God and of man.

If possible for a while let us put all these ideas aside. We all know that no one of them is true. We know that there never has been a fall of man; and so death is not the result of that which never took place. We know it is not a consequence of human sin. We know it was not brought into this world by any enemy of God or man from outside. It is settled scientifically, demonstrated beyond any rational question, that, for worse or for better, death is a part of the universal and eternal order of the world. It was intended as much as life was intended; and, if we can find an explanation for it at all, we must find it on the basis of a recognition of this fact.

Is there any way, then, by which we can reconcile the existence of death with a loving belief in the wisdom and goodness of God? That is the problem which we are now to consider.

At the outset we must try to separate the fact of death from certain things which are not essential to it, which accompany it, which are associated with it in our minds, but which are no necessary part of the problem which we wish to solve. To illustrate, suppose an architect should make careful plans for the construction of a building. He puts these plans

into the hands of workmen, who go on and violate some of the essential conditions of the plans in various places ; and the result is that the work is disfigured, that perhaps the building falls before it is half completed, and buries some of the workmen in the ruins. You will say, of course, that the architect is not to be held responsible for these results which came through the breaking of his plans. Now, in order to find that for which God may justly be held responsible, we must eliminate from the problem those things which are brought about by our own ignorance, passion, wilfulness, our own breaking of the laws of God. Let us try, then, and simplify the problem just as far as we may, and get at that which is essential in the fact of death.

Let us leave aside, then, most of the premature deaths of the world. Some of the saddest experiences of life grow out of the deaths of children. The death-rate in some of the great cities of the world is simply appalling ; and I find myself now and then wondering why the feet of the little ones cross the threshold at all, if they are to be snatched away so soon. And yet, when we look the problem fairly in the face, we are compelled to admit that in nearly all cases these pre-

mature deaths are the fault of men and women themselves. They are no necessary part of the divine order, are not to be charged as indictments against the wisdom or the goodness of Him who governs the world. Carelessness, ignorance, pride, a hundred different causes, are at work to take the little ones out of our arms. Until we are quite sure that human responsibility is not at fault, let us not dare to charge these dark facts against the beneficence of the divine order.

There is another thing we must put aside. We make very little distinction between the fact of death and the pains, the diseases, the sorrows, that precede and lead to death. Here, again, in almost all cases, we ourselves are responsible. It is the fact of death alone, stripped of accretions, and incidents, that God is responsible for. Most of our diseases are preventable. Some of them of course we inherit. But our fathers, our ancestors, through ignorance, through passion, in one way or another, were responsible, if we are not; and we are responsible if we have not done all that we can to neutralise the evil results of the inheritances that have come to us. But most of the pains and diseases of the world that precede death are preventable. We are proving, under

the guidance of our wiser physicians, that the number of these and their virulence can be lessened ; and we know that most of them may be avoided. Let us not, then, aggravate the charge which we make against the goodness of God by holding Him responsible for those things which we ourselves have brought about. How many times is it true, as we look back ! We are ill. We know what did it. The chances are that, when we get well, we shall repeat the offence,—in eating and drinking, the lack of proper care, passionate self-indulgence in one direction or another. We know how many times *we* are responsible for these physical ailments that we roll up as a huge indictment against the wisdom of Him who governs the affairs of men.

Then there is another thing connected with the fact of death which is purely a bit of curious imagination. I have known large numbers of people who, as they thought of death, were burdened with the idea of the grave, of burial, of the disposition of the physical body. But I am not going to be buried. Why should I worry about that ? Why should it trouble me any more than the disposition that shall be made of a suit of clothes which I wore last year ? I am getting rid of certain parts of this physical

body of mine every day. Every time I breathe, every time I move, a part of the body takes its place with the elements out of which it came. I do not worry about these. Why should I worry about what becomes of the whole of it, when I am through? We are not so wise as Socrates. When his disciples were talking to him just before he drank the hemlock, one of them asked him how he would like to be buried; and he answered, with that pathetic humour which even the presence of death could not dismay, that they might bury him any way they pleased if they could catch him; but he did not expect to be there.

Then there is another thing that uselessly troubles us. Literature has done its best to create imaginary horrors connected with death. Look at Milton's picture of death:

"The other shape—

If shape it might be called that shape had none
Distinguishable in member, joint, or limb,
Or substance might be called that shadow seemed,
For each seemed either—black it stood as night,
Fierce as ten furies, terrible as hell,
And shook a dreadful dart."

He refers to death again as that "grisly terror." We have figured it to the imagination by skull and cross-bones. The Greeks had a

lovelier picture. They sometimes referred to death as a beautiful youth holding in his hand an inverted torch. But we by sculpture, by painting, by rhetoric, as expressed in prose and verse, have created horrible imaginations as though they were real entities, and have labelled them *Death*, and so made it a more terrible thing than otherwise it could possibly have been.

Most of us not only fear dying, but we have created such horrible things to follow after death that it is not the process so much that we shrink from as what we are to face when we have emerged from the shadow. Hamlet has expressed these familiar thoughts :

“To die : to sleep,—

No more : and, by a sleep, to say we end
The heartache, and the thousand natural shocks
That flesh is heir to,—’t is a consummation
Devoutly to be wished. To die, to sleep :
To sleep : perchance, to dream : ay, there’s the rub ;
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come,
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,
Must give us pause.”

It is the dread of something after death that makes him again speak of that “undiscovered country from whose bourne no traveller returns.” It is this that makes “cowards of us

all." It is not conscience only that makes cowards of us, as I think. Imagination has created conditions and possible worlds for a belief in which there are no facts, no realities, no proofs. How the preachers from Jonathan Edwards to Spurgeon and men since their day have revelled in piling up all the conceivable horrors that await the soul that has not accepted the theological ideas of the preacher! And so they have made death something entirely different from the simple fact, which is the only part of it which is the work of God.

What is death? It is going to sleep. If a person leads a normal and healthful life, such a life as my friend and comrade, Robert Collyer, who, past eighty, has never missed an engagement on account of illness, who, past eighty, has never taken a meal in bed on account of illness, who, past eighty, has never gone without a meal since he was born on account of illness,—if we could live lives like this, when we got through death would be nothing but going to sleep. That is the part of it which God has appointed, and for which alone he can be justly held accountable. Every physician knows and can tell you that the normal life, when it comes to an end, has little

pain or suffering to fear connected with the fact of dying. There is a natural anæsthesia connected with it and preceding it. I suppose there are few cases where a person knows when he dies, any more than he knows just the moment when he falls asleep. It is the end of an earthly life, that is all ; and because God puts an end to it, to this period of existence, are we not to be grateful to Him for the fact of life ? We have lived, say, twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, sixty, seventy, eighty years. We have looked at the beauties of the sunrise and sunset, we have heard the lapping of the waves on the ocean shore, we have listened to the winds in the trees, we have rejoiced in the morning songs of birds, we have looked into the faces of our friends, we have known something of the ecstasy of love, we have had the children round our feet, we have seen all the wonders of the on-goings of the world,—*we have lived*. Is life not good, not a gift for which we should be thankful, because there comes a period terminating it after a while ? The positive gift was a gift of good. Let us never forget that ; and it is not less good because we may not keep it in perpetuity.

The only thing, then, about the fact of death for which God is responsible is just

going to sleep, passing through the door when we get through with this phase of our earthly existence. "He giveth His beloved sleep."

Now let us turn the matter quite round. If we are not to live here forever, we must die. What are the alternatives? If we are not to die, then we are to continue here in this world. Just as I have tried over and over again to think out different possible worlds, better or worse than the present one, so I have tried over and over again, with all the intellectual keenness I possess, to think of the alternatives to dying. I have tried to decide in my own mind whether they were desirable, whether I would have death eliminated if I could. Let us now for a little consider some of these possibilities. Let us see if they seem satisfactory.

Would you like to live here indefinitely if you could not keep your friends with you? Would you be willing to take the gift of an earthly immortality, just you alone? I would not. I cannot conceive that you would. Love, friendship, the companionship of those who are dear to me, are so much to me that I would rather have them with me anywhere, in any world, in the heavens above or in the deeps below, than to have any paradise I can imagine all alone by myself. I wish, then, to

share the fate, living or dying, of the people I care for.

There is another possibility. Would you be willing to take the gift of immortal life without the gift of immortal youth along with it? Would you be willing to continue to grow older and older and older, and still stay here? Again, I would not. I love life, I love my work, I love my friends, I love all the beauty and glory of the world. I would like, if I could have my way, to stay here as long as I am in good physical and mental condition, as long as I can think and be interested and active and enjoy. But I can imagine a time coming when I might pray to be released from the increasing burdens and infirmities of life. I do not want to continue to exist when I am through *living*. I think, then, we may leave that consideration one side.

There is another one. Suppose we could all live until we were thirty or forty, until the children were fairly grown up around us, and then all stop and stay here forever after,—would you like that? Before you decide, think what it would mean. The world is not very large. By and by there would be just as many people as there would be room for. There would be as many as the resources of

going to sleep, passing through the door when we get through with this phase of our earthly existence. "He giveth His beloved sleep."

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the world could comfortably support. What would that mean? Why, of course it would mean no more children, no more of the delights of family life, in the ordinary sense of the word. The world would be full. Then what? Years and years would pass, hundreds of years, thousands of years, and no new faces, no new experiences, no new associations! I am afraid it would become monotonous and tiresome. I am afraid that we should look at all the great and bright worlds around us, and wonder whether we had not made an unfortunate choice when we decided that we would cast our lot indefinitely with this little planet.

This idea should be emphasised by another consideration. Most people get tired of thinking and studying after a while. The capacity of the brain seems to be limited in this direction; and so we should stop growing, stop advancing, stop progressing, think the same things over and over, read the same things over and over, and after a few thousand years had gone by it seems to me that we should wish we might change our environment, that we might have new stimuli, that we might enter into other associations. I imagine that we might come to feel like persons cast away on an island,—an island, let us say, in the

tropics, naturally productive, the scenery beautiful. The people find themselves fortunate in their home ; but no ship comes to touch their port, no ship goes out bearing any one to some other harbour, and the years go by. Now and then a vessel appears on the horizon, and passes away, coming from where, going to where, they can only guess. Under those conditions would there not grow up impatience of the confinement that made it impossible for the people to explore some other region of the world? Would they not grow tired even of the beauty, the monotony, of the flowers and song-birds and the music of the waves on the shore? We are on this little island world. Up to the present time, people have constantly been leaving it, sailing out into the unknown. We wonder where they are going. But suppose we should all stop here? After some hundreds or thousands of years I imagine we should look at the planets sailing through the blue as though they were ships from some distant port, tending to some unknown harbour, and wonder what they meant, whether they were inhabited by happier beings than we. And I imagine that after a while we should long to break away, to explore those unknown regions of the universe. I think we should get

tired of each other, tired of the scenery, tired of the experiences, and long to sail out into some unknown sea.

Then there is another consideration. We think that death stands in the way of human happiness. Did you ever stop to think that death is the means of conferring happiness upon countless millions more than would be able to taste it did not death exist? Here are a few people on the earth. We live here from twenty to fifty or more years, and pass away, making way for others to come; and so the generations succeed each other. The little ones come, as we vacate our places to make room for them; and so countless myriads are born to see the wonder and taste the beauty and glory of life who never could enter on or gain a glimpse of these things but for the fact of death.

There is another consideration; for I wish to exhaust, so far as I can, all the possibilities in this direction. The world has been growing; and you have noticed, if you have studied history to any purpose, that there are times when some man or some scheme or thought has so dominated the world as to hinder its advance for generations. Take, for example, as an illustration, the theology of Augustine, re-created

by John Calvin, which has dominated the world so many dreary years. Suppose that Augustine had kept on living, and that he and Calvin together had combined to exalt their opinions through their personal influence,—think how they might have held the world back for centuries! It is hard enough for us now to break away from an intellectual system and to free ourselves from the domination of ideas. Suppose there were added to these the domination of the personalities of the men who have lived in the past! What if we had all our Cæsars in the world still, with all the accumulation of power and tyranny they might have gained, along with what we have had since they passed away! Suppose we still had our Tamerlanes, our Napoleons! One of the greatest agencies in the growth and progress of the world is this fact of death. Death unclogs the wheels of the world's chariot of advance, and sets people free, and gives new views and conceptions of things which lift up and lead on the civilisation of the world. I cannot think of any condition of things here in this world, with death eliminated, which would seem to me either hopeful or permanently good.

There is another way of looking at it. We

have just noted that death is a condition of progress. This is truer than we think. We are all evolutionists now. What does that imply? Go back as far as you can and down to the early condition of things, and you will find that growth everywhere means the dying out of certain types and forms and their being succeeded by other higher, nobler, more advanced types and forms. So from the very beginning death has been a condition of growth. The oldest and lowest forms have made way for the next higher; and so the world has gone on.

New being is from being ceased;
No life is but by death;
Something 's expiring everywhere
To give some other breath.

There 's not a flower that glads the spring
But blooms upon the grave
Of its dead parent seed o'er which
Its forms of beauty wave.

The oak that like an ancient tower
Stands massive on the heath
Looks out upon a living world,
But strikes its roots in death.

The cattle on a thousand hills
Clip the sweet herbs that grow
Rank from the soil enriched by herds
Sleeping long years below.

To-day is but a structure built
Upon dead yesterday;
And Progress hews her temple stones
From wrecks of old decay.

Then mourn not death; 't is but a stair
Built with divinest art,
Up which the deathless footsteps climb
Of loved ones who depart.

What has just been said does not involve the continuance of personality. One type gives way to a new type ; but, when we come to the problem as it touches us, a new element is added, a new question arises. We have learned to love, to dream, to hope ; and so we are not contented with the idea that, as lower forms have given way to us, now we should give way to still higher forms of which we are to know nothing. Whether rightly or wrongly, whether imaginary on our part or implanted by God Himself, there is in our hearts a dream of personal continuance, a longing to find the loved ones who have preceded us, to create anew the deathless circles in some better and higher world. Is there any reason for a hope like that ? As a hint in that direction marvelously expressed, take this sonnet by Blanco White, one of the few exquisite sonnets of the world :

" Mysterious night ! when our first parent knew
Thee from report divine, and heard thy name,
Did he not tremble for this lovely frame,
This glorious canopy of light and blue ?
Yet 'neath a curtain of translucent dew,
Bathed in the rays of the great setting flame,
Hesperus, with the host of heaven, came,
And, lo ! creation widened in man's view.
Who could have thought such darkness lay concealed
Within thy beams, O sun ! or who could find,
Whilst fly and leaf and insect stood revealed,
That to such countless orbs thou mad'st us blind ?
Why do we, then, shun death with anxious strife ?
If light can thus deceive, wherefore not life ? "

You see the suggestion. So long as the sun shines, all we know is this little world. When the sun sets, millions of other worlds leap into view. And so the poet asks whether life has not concealed as much as light has.

Lowell has a wonderful little poem on some gold-fish in a glass globe. They float around and see the shadows cast on their little world. If they had intelligence enough, they might wonder what it meant. They would perhaps think, as we do, that the only real world is the globe in which they live, and that what they saw were distorted images of nobody knew what, but of no real significance.

Some insect might climb up to the edge,

and see beyond the limit of his little pool. It might see a chrysalis burst open, and might feel that there was something outside, beyond the limits of the little world it knew. We are like the little goldfish in the globe. We are in our little pool. Distorted images are reflected now and then across our vision. Friend after friend bursts open the chrysalis, and disappears. We dream, we wonder, we hope. Some of us try to study and find out ; some of us blindly accept traditions, in this direction or that, which have come down to us from other people who have tried to find out in the past ; but none of us is sure that this is the end.

And note, if this world is not all, if death is only graduating here and beginning the next stage of life somewhere else, if this is not saying farewell to all the people we love, why, then, death may not be one of the dark problems of life, but on the other hand it may be the very sweetest and divinest of all conceivable gifts of God.

Before we have a right to charge death as a fact against the goodness of God, we are under obligation to prove that it does not mean anything except the dust. So long as there is a reasonable doubt that death is the end of all, so long we have no right to charge it as a part

of an indictment of the goodness of God. If death does mean simply that the angel of God comes and opens the gate and lets us out into a larger and grander world, if through death we graduate from this primary school and enter the next higher grade, why, then, instead of its being a difficult problem, it is one of the greatest possible proofs of the goodness of our Father.

And now, at the end, let us read a little poem called "A Morning Thought," by E. R. Sill, a man who died young, with his life-work only begun :

" What if some morning, when the stars were paling
And the dawn widened and the east was clear,
Strange peace and rest fell on me from the presence
Of a benignant spirit standing near;

" And I should tell him, as he stood beside me:
' This is our earth,—most friendly earth and fair;
Daily its sea and shore, through sun and shadow,
Faithful it turns, wrapped in its azure air.

" ' There is blest living here, loving and serving,
And quest of truth, and serene friendship dear;
But stay not, spirit ! Earth has one destroyer;
His name is Death. Flee, lest he find thee here ! ' "

" And what if then, while the still morning brightened,
And freshened in the elm the summer's breath,
Should gravely smile on me the angel gentle,
And take my hand, and say, ' My name is Death. ' "

CHAPTER VIII

ACCIDENTS AND CALAMITIES

“One adequate support
For the calamities of mortal life
Exists,—one only: an assured belief
That the procession of our fate, howe’er
Sad or disturbed, is ordered by a Being
Of infinite benevolence and power,
Whose everlasting purposes embrace
All accidents, converting them to good.”

IF we can have a faith like that, of course, we can face anything. The great trouble is that there are thousands of persons at the present time—and among them hundreds of the best and most intelligent—who have somehow lost this faith, if they ever had it; and they are disturbed and troubled. They look out over the world and wonder whether there is wisdom, goodness, at the heart of things. I do not feel at all certain that I shall be able adequately to answer all the objections that may be raised to the wisdom and goodness of a world like this. I can only try to throw some little light, if possible, into some of the

dark places. But one thing we need to remember at the outset. It is not necessary that we should adequately answer *all* conceivable objections. We do need, however, if we can find it, a reasonably solid place on which to stand; and we need light enough to see to take the next step. We cannot expect to understand an infinite universe in all its details; but, if we can find reason to believe that goodness does rule, that wisdom does control, in the affairs of men, then we can wait for the unfolding of the meaning of many a thing which is still dark.

I wish to present one alternative which may be of great practical help.

God exists or He does not exist. If God does not exist, then there is no complaint to make. It is folly to raise objections; it is unreasonable to find fault. If we are in the midst of these tremendous forces, and they are unintelligent, if there is no wisdom, no care anywhere, why, then, we might as well find fault with a steam-engine or with a thunderbolt as to find fault with the universe. We criticise, we question, we want things explained; but the desire for explanation, the desire to criticise, implies that there is a reason somewhere, and that things are capable of explana-

tion, if only we were wise enough for the task. If God exists, if there is wisdom and love in the universe dominant over all that we call physical, then that carries with it the absolute assurance that there is an outcome which shall justify the process through which we are passing. So, if you find sufficient reason to believe in God, then you will face all difficulties bravely, and wait patiently to find out what they mean. But if you do not find any reason to believe in God, then stop complaining, stop criticising, stop finding fault, stop growing bitter and hard ; for that whole attitude is utterly absurd and childish. If God does not exist, then there is no one to find fault with. If He does, why, then, some day things will be clear ; for the existence of God carries with it the assurance of an outcome that is good and wise. If we keep this alternative in mind, it ought to be of some practical help.

One thing impresses me as strange. The universe has existed for countless millions of years. This earth of ours has existed for numberless ages, and humanity has been on this planet for hundreds of thousands of years at least ; but people are only beginning to recognise the fact that we are living under the reign of law, that this is a universe of order,

not one governed by caprice, by interference, by spasmodic manifestations of inexplicable will.

Philip Gilbert Hamerton, in one of his books, speaks as though the transition from caprice to order in the thought of the world means the decay and dying out of religion. He instances, as an illustration, a priest, who in a railway accident, when the shock came, suddenly lifted a prayer to God; and, when he was saved, he believed he was saved because of that prayer. That, says Hamerton, is the religious attitude of mind. The scientist believes in the orderly working of all natural forces; and, just so far as this scientific idea extends, religion is leaving the world. So says Hamerton. In other words, God cannot be conceived of as a God of order. He is a God of caprice and confusion; and the minute you introduce order you eliminate God. Only a few people even now have really come into a state of mind where they can rationally and comfortably believe that God is present and working in an orderly fashion. They find Him only in the extraordinary, in the exceptional.

Within a week I have heard a clear-minded liberal imply this conception of things. If you had asked her the question outright, she would

have denied that she believed these old ideas ; and yet her unconscious expression implied that belief. This means simply that, after all these ages, the world is only coming to begin to recognise the fact that God is a God of order, and that He works in an orderly fashion.

I wish to indicate by a few illustrations the way people have been accustomed to look at this matter of accident and calamity. Those who are familiar with Virgil will remember the story of how Æneas, when he had started on his voyage in search of Italy, met with a great calamity to his fleet. A sudden storm descended, and his ships were blown out of their course and scattered over the sea, and some of them were destroyed. What had happened ? How does the poet explain this circumstance ? He had to go back to a story like this. Once upon a time the three goddesses Juno, Minerva, and Venus had a contest as to which was the most beautiful. Paris, the son of Priam, who was the king of Troy, was the umpire to decide the question. Various considerations were offered, and he was moved to decide in favour of Venus. What did that mean ? It meant that Juno was angry because she did not win in this contest. Angry with whom ? Angry with Paris, of course ; but her

anger did not stop there. She was angry with Priam and with the city of Troy and the whole Trojan race to which Paris belonged. She fought and helped in the destruction and overthrow of the city ; and then, after the remnant had set forth on a voyage for Italy, she pursued them with her hatred. She went to the god of the wind, Æolus, and offered him a consideration for which he was induced to let loose this storm, and so bring about this great calamity. Do you see? No conception of natural order, no conception of decent human justice, only the anger of a goddess that brought about that great calamity of the storm at sea!

Take another case from the antique world. Niobe was the proud mother of twelve beautiful children, six sons and six daughters. She boasts of her good fortune ; and some of her rivals are angry. The gods are jealous ; and in a fit of pique, they destroy at once all the twelve children and leave her the image of desolation and woe for all time,—no conception of any natural order, no conception of any decent human justice. A divinity is offended in some way ; and a great calamity follows.

We hear echoes every little while, till this

year 1905 A.D., of similar conceptions still lingering in people's minds as to the way God treats His children. Do you not know of any case where a mother has been supposed to be proud of her child, or loved a child too much, until God, jealous and angry, has sent a disease or calamity of some sort upon her? We have not yet outgrown this pagan, barbaric, immoral, utterly contemptible way of looking at things.

These ideas were not confined to the pagan world. You have only to pass the narrow border into Palestine to find similar conceptions dominating there. I call your attention to one or two illustrations. During the reign of Ahab the heavens were shut for three years and six months, according to the story. No rain and no dew in all that time. Why? Because Ahab was a wicked king, and God hated him. But He punished not Ahab alone; He punishes him least of any one; for, being the king, if there was anything to eat and drink in the country, of course his wants would be supplied. But He arbitrarily punished all the people of the land on account of the supposed wickedness of the king.

One other illustration. David commits what no one of us would ever think of as being a

sin at all. He orders a census,—a counting of the people. This is supposed to indicate a lack of trust in God, who was able to make armies conquer, whether they were as numerous as their opponents or not. So God was angry with David for taking the census. What does He do? Punish David? Not directly; but thousands and thousands of Israelites are smitten by a sudden calamity and slain. Here, again, there is no conception of natural order, no conception of what to us are fundamental principles in morals. And yet, as I have said, this feeling still exists. You will hear it on the street to-morrow if you will listen,—a belief that God still governs the world in that sort of fashion. An accident or calamity happens, and it is a divine judgment.

It is the same in the New Testament. A tower in Siloam falls, and eighteen men are killed. The popular conception is not that the tower was improperly built, not that the foundation was defective, not that something was wrong, but that God pushed it over to kill these people. That is what the popular talk implied. And you may trace the matter from that day to this up through the history of the church.

There is a great fire, and a city is half-con-

sumed : it is a judgment of God. There is a pestilence, a plague : it is a judgment of God. The army of a certain king is defeated : it is a judgment of God. No matter what happens, it is a judgment. The lightning stroke is a judgment, the falling of a bridge is a judgment. That is the way in which things are explained.

Among our ancestors in New England we find the same ideas prevalent ; and they have come down to very modern times. In every such calamity, God was angry ; and only as they could ward off the divine wrath would the evil cease. I remember only a few years ago there was an epidemic in Montreal. What did the people do ? Study it from the point of view of scientific medicine ? No. What did happen ? They organised a religious procession, and marched through the streets, carrying the infection everywhere. It was a judgment of God ; and humiliation and prayer, the magic of saints' bones and miracle of some sort, must be looked to to ward off the danger.

What are we learning to-day in the East ? I interject this right here, comparing it to what happened in the city of Montreal. Japanese surgeons have managed the matter of disease in such a way that during this entire campaign less than 1 per cent. have died of disease.

They have practically wiped it out of existence by pure scientific study and sanitary regulation.

What is the trouble with the judgment theory in the government of the world? In the first place, it overlooks the fact that the judgments are frequently immoral, and almost always unjust. On the judgment theory the right people ought to be hurt. Frequently the right people are not hurt at all. It is the good people, the innocent people, the kindly people, the lovely people, quite as often as the bad who are apparently punished. Can we have any belief in a good God managing the world after that fashion?

There is another evil about this way of looking at things. It diverts our attention from the fact that God is always at work by orderly methods. He is in the sunshine and the rain, in the growth of the grasses and trees, in the opening of the flowers and the ripening of the fruits, in the rising and setting of the sun, in the ordinary ongoing of the world, in all that is beautiful and benign and helpful, because they are all the expression of the thought and feeling and life of God. God is not in the accidental only. He is in what we call—in our ignorance—the accidental because the

accidental is merely the interrupted working of some regular force. Something gets in the way, and then the extraordinary thing happens ; but it is only the ordinary forces that have produced the result.

Are there, then, no judgments of God ? There *are* judgments of God every day, every hour, every moment, all our lives ; but they are the expression of the natural working out of things. If there be an infraction of God's laws, there is an inevitable result.

To illustrate : a young man studies, hoping to fit himself to enter Harvard or Yale. When the day comes for the test, he fails. It is his day of judgment, but it is not extraordinary. He did not study carefully enough, he did not comply with the conditions ; and, when he came to the trial, he came short,—that is all. That is an illustration of the working of the divine law of judgment. In my physical life there are the regular eternal laws, the forces of God. I disregard some one of them. It does not produce any marked effect, or I do not notice it. I disregard it again and again. By and by, something happens : I am ill. What does that mean ? It is no arbitrary infliction of a penalty. The accumulation of little activities results in this definite outcome

at last. God is at work all the time; and at last I stand in judgment, and am condemned because I have broken His laws. Nothing extraordinary; it is the working out of natural forces according to God's changeless laws.

A similar thing is true in my mental make-up. I look for truth or I do not; I study to attain truth or I do not. I cultivate some special faculty or power or I neglect it. By and by something occurs that puts me to the test; and I fail. I am judged; I am acquitted or condemned. Has anything extraordinary happened? Nothing. Natural forces have been working; and these results have occurred, that is all.

So, because I do not believe in these arbitrary inflictions of judgment, do not think that I exclude judgment from the world. Judgment is everywhere and always in the form of inevitable results.

With these principles in mind, let us consider some of the great accidents and calamities of the world, and see if we can throw any light upon them.

First, note some of these great catastrophes that occur now and then on a large scale because of the great forces which are at work in the evolution of the world.

For the purpose of illustration I will seem to accept the nebular hypothesis of the world, no matter whether it be true or not. According to that theory, the space now filled by the solar system was once filled with a fire mist. This condensed and rotated; and by and by ring after ring, as it cooled, was flung off from the outer rim and condensed into planets. After a time our little earth, one of the youngest children of the sun, was born. It was fluid and hot, but gradually it began to cool; and, as it cooled, the outer surface was caked and hardened. And they tell us that, according to this theory, the centre of the earth is hot and probably molten to-day. No matter whether this be true or not, for my purpose. According to this theory, as the earth cools, it shrinks. What does that mean? Did you ever—I have, as a farmer's boy—notice the cooling of a pan of lard, how it cracks, and how mountain chains and ridges are heaped up? Precisely the same sort of process is going on in the cooling of the crust of the earth. The crust breaks and mountain chains are elevated. It trembles, and you have earthquakes. The inner fires break through, and you have volcanoes; and the forces at work now and then start up great tidal waves in the sea which beat against the

shore with destructive power. Now these things that happen in a world like this are only, so to speak, the earth's growing pains. They are natural and inevitable in the process of the evolution of a planet like this. But they produce great catastrophes after life appears on the planet. Form after form of life is swept out of existence. Cities, towns, tribes, are wiped out. Take, as an illustration, the destruction of Herculaneum and Pompeii by the eruption of Vesuvius. Was that an act of carelessness or thoughtlessness or hatred on the part of God? It was one of the inevitable happenings in the growth of a planet. These great forces are in their working inevitably a part of the manifestation of planetary life.

But let me make one suggestion. When those towns were planted where they were, the people *knew* that they were liable to be overwhelmed in this way. Why did they build there then? It was a beautiful place for a town,—good soil, a fine view of the harbour,—and the people took their chances,—the same gambling instinct which is in us all, and which makes it possible to put ourselves in places of peril, disregarding suggestions of danger. This, perhaps, had something to do

with it. But must we hold God responsible when people build a city where they *know* it is in the track of danger, and when there is plenty of space in which they might plant their cities where they would not be liable to calamities like this?

Take a modern case. A little while ago the city of Galveston was largely destroyed by a great tidal wave. Who is responsible? If they had stopped to think, they would have known when they built the city that, if ever a tidal wave did come,—and, of course, they knew that it might come,—they would be liable to this kind of overflow. But people are never willing to put themselves to trouble and expense in the way of prevention until they have been driven to do so by a calamity. It would not have cost as much as it did afterwards; and all the loss would have been saved.

How is it in regard to a fire? People will go on blindly, grasping the money they can make at once, and putting up buildings that are simply tinder boxes. They know all the time, that they are liable to the overwhelming devastation of fire. Yet they go on taking their chances, gathering in the money to-day, and hoping that they will escape, illustrating the spirit of Louis XIV., who, indulging himself

and having his own way, exclaimed, "After me the deluge!" This is the spirit in which people build, the way in which they indulge themselves; and yet, when the calamity comes, which they might have foreseen and provided against, it is "a mysterious dispensation of Providence!" This is the marvellous working of God! This is a judgment! It is nothing but a natural result of their own deeds, of their own folly.

How could these great catastrophes be prevented? I suppose some might suggest that God might have built the world in some other way. Some might suggest that a tremendous miracle might have been wrought at the critical moment. Some might say that God, who made the Red Sea stand up while the children of Israel marched through, might have interfered with the tidal wave at Galveston. You can indulge in speculations like that if you choose. Some would think men might have been suddenly made supernaturally wise so as certainly to have foreseen these accidents; but these are not rational explanations.

I wish now to consider some modern accidents and calamities. The principles involved are clearer, if I take these concrete cases.

I have already alluded to one case of epi-

demic disease. Consider the great plague in London. It never occurred to the people at that time that they were responsible for it. They believed that it was an arbitrary infliction of God, and that the way to overcome it was by humiliation and fasting and prayer. But we are learning that disease is something we can master if we will. We can wipe out the yellow fever. We can make impossible the devastation of almost any disease. It is merely a question as to whether or not we *will*. In regard to this, then, we have no right to hold God responsible. What do the people do on the banks of the Ganges? They pour into the river every kind of filth, and then the water is sacred; and it is a part of their religious ceremony to bathe in it and drink it. And, when disease comes, the gods are angry!

Let us come right close home. A year or two ago there was a great railway accident here in the tunnel. Many people were killed, many others injured. What was the matter? Was it a mysterious calamity that we need to explain in order to believe in the goodness and justice of God? It was a purely preventable thing. Human carelessness and human greed were entirely responsible. Let us not

dare, even in the privacy of our own hearts, to charge God as responsible in cases like this.

Turn to another case. Last year the *General Slocum* was burned here in the East River; and my morning paper was flooded with letters from persons who said that it was simply absurd, in the face of calamities like that, to talk any longer about God or about God's goodness, or about any wisdom in the management of the universe. A world in which a thing like that could happen must be a world for an atheist, or worse. Letter after letter gravely took this ground; and I suppose thousands of persons thought it was wisdom. What really happened? A steamer, old and not in the best condition, was dangerously overcrowded, to start with. It was manned by a crew not thoroughly trained. There was no adequate provision in case of fire. The hose was rotten, so that, when pressure was brought to bear on it, it naturally burst. The life-preservers were so heavy that they sank of themselves instead of floating the persons dependent upon them. This was the condition of affairs. A fire starts; and then, instead of running to the shore, so that as many as possible might leap and escape, the ship—for some reason I have never been able to under-

stand—headed in another direction. Who was responsible? The inspectors, the owners, the managers. It was carelessness; it was a case of greed, of inefficiency of every kind. It was man's stupidity and selfishness, nothing else in the world. What would people have? Would they have had an army of angels suddenly appear in the blue to put a premium on human stupidity and avarice? What would you have God do? If I walk over the edge of a precipice, would you have Him upset the universe by suspending the law of gravitation to prevent the result of my carelessness? What would you have God do? Suddenly change the nature of fire, so that it will not burn? Suddenly change the nature of water, so that it will not drown? Would you have Him save people from the results of their own stupidity, their own avarice, their own selfishness, their own weakness, and thus put a premium on these qualities? Why should any one take the trouble to build a boat decently, to man it decently, to run it decently, if at the last moment God will appear to save people from the results of their own mistakes? What kind of government is it that people expect in this world?

You will find everywhere, as in studying

calamities and accidents, that the same principles are at work. Results follow because people are not willing to study the laws of God and obey them. What kind of a universe is this in which we are? It is one in which these great forces of nature are at work according to unvarying and unchanging laws; and we can find out what those laws are. That is what our brains are for. If we choose to study these laws, and find out how these forces work and get them on our side, then there is hardly anything that we cannot accomplish. Omnipotence is at our back as our helper. We must study the methods of Omnipotence, and be willing to obey the eternal conditions. The whole world is being made over, in the words of the prophet, in ways that we did not dream of. The valleys are being exalted, and the hills and mountains are being made low, the crooked made straight and the rough places plain. The seas are becoming ferryways. The mountains are pierced, the rivers are tunneled and bridged. We talk without regard to distance; and we are making over the earth. In the beauty and glory and wonder of modern civilisation we are learning God's methods, co-operating with God, finding out how God's forces work, and turning them to account, and

bringing forth these wonderful results. Now what does this mean? Here is this tremendous force of electricity. Do I expect God to change it because I get in its track? It is working for good; but all this tremendous power must blast whatever comes in its way, whether it does so as a result of carelessness or not.

To illustrate my point, I make a personal confession. Three times since I came to this city I have escaped death by an instant. Who was to blame? Suppose I had been killed, would it have been a mysterious accident or calamity, for which God was responsible? I was to blame every time. Once it was that insane desire to catch a particular car. It did not make any difference whether I caught that car or not. I was in no hurry. If I had been delayed for an hour, the universe would have gone on just as well. I risked my life in pure foolishness.

You will find, if you study them carefully, that we ourselves are nearly always responsible for accidents or calamities. They are no mystery. They are usually the results of human greed, stupidity, and carelessness. What, then, shall we do? Let us recognise this; and let us recognise the wonderful work

of God in the ordinary ways of this marvelous world. Let us study carefully to find out what His conditions are. Let us co-operate with them, and make the world, as we may, a paradise.

Let us remember one other thing. If, in the course of one of these calamities, a hundred people are killed at once, that introduces no new problem. If death be explicable at all, it is just as easily explained in the case of a hundred as in one. The size of the calamity apparently overwhelms us; but it does not change the principles at issue.

Let us also remember that this is a world in which we are learning to live; a world in which we are cultivating our own natures, developing our own souls; that it is precisely in dealing with such great forces as these that we can best come to the consciousness of ourselves. And, if this is a primary school, whether I go out to-day or to-morrow, as the result of old age or as the result of accident, does not much matter, if I am still in God's universe, still learning God's lessons, still building myself up into the higher nature of one of His children.

CHAPTER IX

MENTAL DISEASE AND DECAY

A BLOW on the head, if it is severe enough, will render a man unconscious. During certain diseases he is insane. A small quantity of Indian hemp seems to disturb, or entirely to suspend, the ordinary working of his mind. The excessive use of alcohol will produce similar results. You are familiar with all these facts. A man is vigorous and strong in his youth ; and the physical vigour seems to match and go along with his mental power. But this culminates by and by. He ascends to the summit of his development, and then begins to go down on the other side ; and, as he goes down physically, he seems also to decline mentally. As people get old, their memory fails them ; they will tell you the same thing over half a dozen times in a day. They have forgotten it. And so in every direction you will find these signs that we ordinarily speak of as growing mental weakness, until by and

by you reach the condition that Shakespeare speaks of in the familiar words :

“ Last scene of all,
That ends this strange, eventful history,
Is second childishness and mere oblivion;
Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans—everything.”

The man appears to go out, like a snuffed candle ; and, so far as we can see the process, that is the end.

Besides this, there are other sad facts that go along with this class, such as idiocy, those cases by the hundred and the thousand over the world where there appears to be no complete mental development ; and there are the sad, sad cases of insanity. There are asylums, I suppose, in every State of the Union and in every country of the civilised world, crowded with those who have, as we say, lost their minds. I shall not dwell on facts like these. I do not need to stir your sympathy. I do not need to appeal to your imagination. Very likely you are all too alive to the seriousness and the sadness of facts like these. I will hint them, recognise them ; and we will go on.

The primitive peoples of the world had a very natural explanation of all these things. When a warrior was struck a blow on the

head and became unconscious, or when he fainted for any reason, or when he was asleep, his mind for the time being, his soul, his essential personality, had gone away; and they waited for him to come back again. When he awakes, when consciousness returns, they suppose the soul has come back to the body. We keep in our ordinary speech a remnant still of this prevalent idea. For, when one of our friends faints and recovers consciousness, we say he has *come to*, come back to the body. This is a suggestion, a survival, of the old belief. In the cases of idiocy and insanity, their general explanation was that of demoniac possession. They did not mean, they did not believe, that the person in all cases was controlled by evil spirits. One might be taken possession of by a god or by a good spirit for some good purpose. So they regarded many persons in this condition as inspired; and they tended them carefully, and waited upon their utterances, trusting to some wise man to interpret that which was meaningless in ordinary cases, so that they might receive something in the way of supernatural guidance. The New Testament, as you are aware, is full of this belief. There is no recognition there of any natural insanity; as we are accustomed to think of it to-day. The

insane were possessed, dominated, by some invisible personality, controlled in this way for good or ill by the power which had taken possession of them. I only mention this in explanation, in passing. I shall not attempt either to refute or defend any of these theories. I will simply say, however, that there are persons in the modern world who share all of these primitive beliefs; and these are not in all cases ignorant or credulous or uneducated people. There are those who have made careful studies of these things who hold that insanity in many cases is the result of the influence of some invisible personality. I waive this, however, one side, as not germane to the purpose that I have in hand.

Now I wish to say here, as I have said once or twice before in connection with some of these hard problems, that it ought to help us to clear our minds of confusion, to take clear-cut cognisance of one fact. No soul, no God, no explanation, no need of any; no difficulty, if these facts are the result of the working of forces that do not feel, that do not think, that do not love. If they are the outcome, the manifestations, of blind power, why then, of course, there is no intelligent explanation possible. We can trace and study, if we choose,

the forces that are at work ; but there is no rational explanation, there is no way of getting at a satisfactory solution of this dark problem of life. The poet-author of the Book of Job cried out that he wished he could find God, that he could come to Him, appeal to Him, vindicate his innocence, and ask Him for an explanation. But, if there be no God, then all this cry of the soul for some satisfactory explanation of these difficulties is, on the face of it, absurd. We must simply submit to inevitable facts, and there end it. But we do hunger for an explanation. There is that in us which wishes to believe that we are souls, that we are not to be snuffed out, like a candle, in the act of dying. There is something in us which wishes to believe that there are intelligence and sympathy and love in the universe somewhere, that there is some person who cares. And, if there is, why, then, it is legitimate for us to seek an explanation for these dark facts. I shall go on that theory, and discuss the problem as though we were souls and as though God existed.

I shall, however, take cognisance of other sides of the problem ; and I ask you to consider this fact. There are two possible theories in the light of which you can explain, after a

fashion, the working of what we call the mind. One is the materialistic theory ; the other, of course, is the spiritualistic theory, using the word in a philosophic sense.

On the theory of materialism, the mind is the product of the brain, just as really as bile is the product of the liver. No brain, no mind, on that theory. It is the outcome, the result, of the combination and the motions of certain tiny material particles that make up the brain. On this theory, of course, it is easy to understand that when the brain is injured the working of the mind must be interfered with, and that when the brain ceases to exist the mind also ceases. Gautama, the founder of Buddhism, that was originally atheistic and materialistic, compared a human being to a chariot. A chariot was made up of different parts that entered into its construction ; but you take it to pieces, and the chariot ceases to be. This was one of his illustrations. Of course, idiocy, insanity, all the phenomena that we have now in mind, would be easily explicable on that theory. But I wish to note that they are just as easily explicable on the other theory.

Suppose the soul, the mind, is something, an entity, a personality, back of the brain and using it as an instrument through which to

communicate with this material world : are not all these phenomena as easily to be understood on this theory as on the other ?

Let me suggest one or two illustrations. Here is a piano. No matter if Paderewski himself sits at it, ready to bring out its wondrous possibilities, if it is out of tune, he cannot produce perfect music. If it is broken, he cannot produce music at all. Paderewski, however, is complete, he is not injured ; but he cannot manifest this marvellous musical power of his because the instrument through which he works is not capable of showing what he can do. If Hercules had placed in his hand a slight, frail reed instead of his club, he could not strike with all the power of Hercules. The effect of his blow would be limited by the capacity of the reed. If the reed were broken, that would not necessarily touch Hercules. He might be all there, and yet utterly incapable of manifesting his power.

Suppose you go into a great factory. The engines, the source of power, are in another room, shut off from where you are. Belts and pulleys come through the wall, and are attached to machinery of which you can observe the working. Suppose you cut the connection. The engine in the other room is intact,

the power of the steam or electricity is in no way interfered with ; and yet all the machinery must stop simply because the connection is broken. Visit the city of Buffalo. They tell me that there is machinery worked by the power of the falling of the waters of Niagara. Electricity is generated, and is carried to Buffalo. As in the case of a factory, if you cut the connection, though all the mighty power is intact, its working is interfered with, and the results cease. This illustration, I take it, will make perfectly clear the point I have in mind ; and that is all I wish.

It is, then, conceivable, as a theory, that the mind is the product of the brain. There is another theory,—that the mind is not the product of the brain, but is an independent entity, a personality, that for the time being uses the brain. There are those who have made a careful study of these things who tell us that inside these material bodies there are ethereal bodies, and that when this body disappears, dissolves, the other goes out intact and uninjured, a complete personality, not only as fine, as strong as it was before, but even taking on additional power and entering into new and wider and higher relations. This is perfectly conceivable. Nobody is wise enough to disprove the

supposition. It is no more unnatural than is the history of the grub which breaks its chrysalis, and emerges into another and higher element as a butterfly. I only say, and I only wish you to understand me as saying, that this is possible, and that there is no science which can contradict it.

And now, while their opinions do not ultimately settle anything, I wish to call your attention to the views of a few distinguished scientific men ; and I will not confine my selection to those who occupy one side. You can take them for what they are worth.

A famous French astronomer, Lalande, gives expression to this idea : I have swept the heavens with my telescope, and I find no trace of God. Does that seem to you a wise saying ? It seems to me one of the silliest of which any sane man could possibly be guilty. Suppose a physician should take a human brain, and study it carefully with a microscope, and, when he was through, say, as though it was a conclusive statement and really meant something, that he nowhere discovered a thought, that he never came across an idea. Suppose it were Shakespeare's brain, and he did not find Hamlet or Ophelia or Lear, would it be wise for a man to utter a conclusion like that ?

Moleschott, another famous scientist, uttered a phrase which has been regarded by many as a remarkable statement. He says: No phosphorus, no thought,—as if in phosphorus he had found an explanation of thought! his idea being that, unless there is phosphorus in the composition of the brain, the brain could not be efficient as an organ of thinking. What of it? Is that wise? It seems to me, again, one of the silliest sayings possible for a human being to utter. It means absolutely nothing. You might say: Without a dynamo, no electricity, that there was no such thing as a manifestation of electricity without a dynamo. Consider it carefully. It means nothing at all.

The great champion to-day of materialism, a man who scouts the idea that there is any God or any soul, is the famous German scientist Haeckel. He is a brilliant writer and intensely interesting. I remember the interest with which I read the first of his works which came into my hands, *The History of Creation*. He published a book last year which had great vogue, and recently he has published another. He assumes that no reasonable man can believe in the existence of the soul. He claims that mind is the product of chemical force. Does he prove it? We ordinarily suppose

that it is the business of science to prove its assertions, and yet this magnificent statement is a pure assumption. What does Haeckel do? He admits that within historic times, so far as we know, life has never been produced from non-life. He admits that there is no trace to-day of any knowledge by which chemistry could account for consciousness. What does he do? Notice the airy assumption. He tells us, as though that ought to be satisfactory to us, and as though we ought to be glad to get rid of God and the human soul on terms like this, that we must remember that ages ago chemical conditions on the planet were different from what they are now! That is the entire reason which he gives us for surrendering belief in the existence of the soul. I am perfectly ready to give up my belief in the existence of the soul, only I want an adequate reason for it. I cannot understand how anybody should choose to believe a lie. I, at any rate, wish to know what sort of being I am. If I am a soul, I should like to know it, not simply believe it. If I am not a soul, I should like to know that. I would choose to adjust myself to reality, and not to be the fool all my life long of a false belief.

Now let us note what a few other scientists

say. Herbert Spencer was an agnostic ; yet he asserts that the one thing we know more certainly than anything else in the world is the existence of an infinite and eternal energy back of all phenomena and from which all things proceed. And he goes on to tell us, further, that this energy is akin to us, that that which wells up in us under the form of consciousness is of the same essence as this infinite and eternal energy.

What does Tyndall tell us ? I do not forget what he said about protoplasm ; but he tells us that it is utterly impossible to explain consciousness in any materialistic way. He says that the gulf between matter, or force, and consciousness is just as impassable in the light of modern science as it was to primeval man.

What does Huxley tell us ? He, again, was an agnostic. He was discussing Büchner and Berkeley. He said that, as an honourable scientist, if he were compelled to choose between their positions, he would be obliged to stand with Berkeley rather than with Büchner.

Where is John Fiske ? He tells us that materialism has been killed by rational scientific study, that it is absurd as a philosophy.

Sir Oliver Lodge, one of the most noted English scientists, tells us we shall never understand this marvellous world and the part which we play in it until we go beyond the limits of the visible, and recognise the spiritual forces which fold us round. These are some of the things that some of the great scientific men of the modern world are saying.

Now consider two or three things bearing on the nature of the soul. Of course, it is no part of my plan to try to prove it, as if we were dealing with it by itself. I only offer you a few considerations, for you to think over, that look in that direction.

In order to get mind out of matter, what does Clifford do? And what does Haeckel do? Clifford begins to talk about "mind stuff" as connected with every particle of matter, and Haeckel has to resort to "atom souls." Before you can get feeling out of that which has no feeling, before you can get thought out of that which does not think, before you can get justice out of that which knows no justice, before you can get righteousness out of that which is morally indifferent, before you can get the qualities which *make a man* out of matter, you have got to change your definition of

matter. In other words, you have got to make matter mean what mind means, which gives up the whole problem.

Remember that the only thing that we really know first hand is mind. I *know* that I feel, I *know* that I think, I *know* that I hope, I *know* that I fear, I *know* that I aspire, I *know* that I love, I *know* that I cry for justice, I *know* that I look forward to the righting of the wrongs of the world. These are all first-hand knowledge : *I know them*. Every other item of human knowledge comes to us from one remove, as inference.

Another consideration which is suggested. The universe has been climbing through a cosmic process that reaches back and down countless millions of years. It has climbed up, passed all these different stages until man appears ; and man has been climbing up from the animal into the heart, the brain, the spiritual nature, until we have, as the issue and outcome of this process, the most distinguished and noble souls of which history gives us a glimpse. Is it quite believable, quite rational, that the power which has been doing this has no purpose, no outcome, nothing to justify the age-long process, but that it is to end at last in a puff of smoke, in nothing at all ? If you

can believe it, you can believe what does not seem to me reasonable.

I touch my desk. That movement is manifested in the brain ; and that results in an impulse that runs down my arm, and leads me to do something with my hand. Somewhere coinciding with a certain stage of this process was a thought, a feeling ; and yet I wish you to note that neither the thought nor the feeling was any part of this chain of motion. That was complete as a physical process, with the thought and the feeling left out. To those who can feel the force of this reasoning it is demonstrated that mind is something entirely different from what we are accustomed to think of as matter.

John Fiske, in his *Through Nature to God*, works out another argument which I suggest. Herbert Spencer tells us that life is a series of adjustments of inner relations to outer relations. When you find some living thing making an appeal by its activities to something supposed to be outside, you may be almost certain that that something must be there. The eye came in response to light. The ear came in response to movements which were translated into sound. So, wherever you find the life force reaching out in some direction,

as if toward a reality, you will always find the reality.

From the beginning of human history, men have been believing that they were in the midst of invisible spiritual powers; and the entire religious life of the world means a reaching out toward these. Here is this inner relation of the heart, the thought, the life of men, adjusting itself to a supposed outer relation. Now, if that outer relation is an illusion, then the universe is one huge lie from centre to circumference. Here is a reversal of the entire process of evolution, which was true up to the time when men appeared. The simple fact that man's mightiest, grandest life has been developed in its outreaching appeal towards the divine and the spiritual is scientific demonstration that these are not mere dreams.

There is another suggestion. As we study the human mind as embodied in any single individual, we find that there are powers only partially understood and yet which transcend the material, transcend the body. There are persons—and this is perfectly well known by all competent students—who can hear without ears, who can see without eyes. There are cases of mental communication—without any

of the ordinary means and in defiance of any recognised methods—half-way round the world. These are facts; and, if a man does not know that they are facts, he is simply ignorant, that is all.

One thing more. Some of the wise scientific men of Europe and America have been engaged in a systematic study of psychical research; and whether it be true or not, they have become convinced that they have had communications with people who used to live here and who have passed through the experience which we call death. At any rate, the opinions of great and distinguished men who have made careful studies in this direction, and who assert these beliefs, ought to command on our part respectful consideration.

But I waive all that one side. I simply wish to say this. If there is a rational ground for belief that the mind is something different from the matter of which the body is composed, that it is not a product of brain, but may exist independent of it,—if, I say, this is a reasonable belief, though it be not demonstrated as true, it leaves us what I regard as a perfectly satisfactory explanation of this dark problem of mental disease and decay.

What are the causes of these dark facts?

The same that we found for most of the evils that afflict human life. If the laws of the universe—that is, the laws of God—were perfectly understood and perfectly obeyed, there would be no such thing as mental disease and decay, with the exception of that which accompanies the gradual growth of old age and the transition from this life to another. All these things are the result of ignorance, of passion, of vice, of disregard of the laws of God. And let us remember constantly, in passing, that, while many regard this as the darkest problem of all, it is shorn of one difficulty, in that there is no conscious pain, no sense even of the deprivation, or the loss, so that all that sorrow is eliminated. All these things are simply the result of broken law. We bring them upon ourselves, or we inherit the results of the law-breaking of our ancestors. They might have been prevented.

The only way conceivable by which God might have prevented these evils is by upsetting and overturning the order of His own universe. If He interferes to prevent the natural and necessary results of the breaking of His laws, then there is disorder everywhere, no possibility of study, no possibility of building up individual character, no possibility of know-

ledge or ordered science, no far-reaching plans for attaining any results. It is asking a good deal of Him to suppose that, to ward off the results of our own actions, our own ignorance, our own passion, stupidity, and lack of sense, God should defeat His own method of working, and introduce disorder in this magnificent universe which is governed, as it only can be according to any rational conception, by eternal and changeless laws.

If we may believe in a soul, if we may believe in God, if we may recognise the fact that all these evils are the results of broken law, if we may see clearly that by obedience, by study, by care, all these things may be eliminated and outgrown, even here on earth ; if we may believe that the soul goes on after the fact of death, and that somewhere in God's great house there are room and time for study, for recovery, for development ; if there be opportunity somewhere for each soul to come to the highest and noblest of which it is capable,—then I submit that this great dark problem is shot through with light. It is only as if the sun for an hour were clouded. The cloud does not touch the sun. It does not put out the sun. Suppose a soul clouded for what is only an hour, a moment,—if we

may believe all these things, and nobody can tell us that we may not,—then the problem disappears, and hope and trust take its place ; and we need only to wait for the dawn of God's bright and blessed and eternal day.

CHAPTER X

IS GOD A FATHER?

AS we wake up to consciousness and look around us, we observe two great fundamental facts. The first is our own existence. We *are*. Of that we are conscious, and so, directly and inevitably, certain. But we recognise that around us, outside of us, there is a Somewhat, a Something, or a Somebody that is not ourselves. What is this which is not ourselves? That I wish to ask you for a little time seriously to consider. The plan and purpose I have in mind will compel me to run rapidly over a great many separate points. I refer those of you who care to go into the matter more fully to two of my books, *Belief in God* and *The Passing and Permanent in Religion*. In these you will find most or all of these points treated more fully and adequately.

We have found, as the result of the scientific investigation of the modern world, that this Being which is not ourselves is *one* Being.

All the multiplicity of the universe, stars and systems, earth, mountains, trees, and rivers,—all these are the manifestation of one Power,—unity everywhere. This is a *Uni*-verse.

And this Being, or Power, which is not ourselves is limitless in might. So far as we can conceive or think, we are justified in speaking of it as an infinite and almighty Power.

Next it is a power that manifests itself as perfect order,—no chaos, no disorder anywhere. Some one has said that science has failed so far to discover one imperfect or defective atom. Perfect order,—that is what this Power manifests itself as being.

In the next place, consider carefully as to whether or not I am justified in saying that it is an intelligent Power. Everywhere everything moves so as to match our human intelligence. It is intelligible; and that which is intelligible must, I submit, be the manifestation of *intelligence*. So I do not think that we go too far in saying that not only is this Power one, mighty, orderly, but that it is an intelligent Power.

Now let us take the next step. I believe, not in the old sense of Paley and his watch, but in a larger and more comprehensive sense, that we can trace design. Not only is this an

orderly Power, it is a power pursuing a purpose. From the far-away beginnings, millions of years ago, this Power has trodden a pathway that has led to the attainment of certain definite ends. It has reached out towards the accomplishment of certain things,—things which an adequate intelligence could have foreseen thousands of years ago. To-day we can foresee certain things which are promised in the future and towards which the forces that are at work around us are with apparent intelligence and purpose leading.

Not only is it a purposing, but it is a transcendent Power. By this I mean that it is larger than any thoughts so far manifested. It fills the visible universe ; and it transcends it on every hand. How do I know? I know because this Power is working towards certain definite ends which can be discerned. Those ends are not yet attained ; but we can see that the universe is in process towards them. The argument is precisely as simple as this. You go out into an orchard in the spring or in midsummer. The tree has put forth buds. They are unfolding ; and you feel perfectly certain that there is a power here adequate to the complete unfolding of those buds into finished leaves. You feel perfectly certain that there

is a power here that by and by will open into blossoms. And, when the tiny beginnings of the fruit are set, you feel perfectly certain that here is a power that can develop and which is going to develop this fruit, and by and by hang it on the boughs, ripe and rich and luscious. Now we see everywhere in this universe around us the beginnings of certain things which are not yet complete; and, as we look back and down the past and see how there were forms of buds and blossoms in different stages of the world's evolution that have been unfolded and completed, are we not logically and scientifically justified in saying that the power which was manifested there, say a million years ago, was more than that million-years-ago manifestation, because it has come to more since? And so are we not justified in looking ahead towards the future, and saying that this power which has been moving in an orderly fashion towards certain attainments in the past is capable of attaining the things which are promised in the buds and blossoms of to-day?

It is not only a power with a purpose: it is a righteous power, or, to quote the classic phrase of Matthew Arnold, "a power not ourselves which makes for righteousness." It *has*

to. For what does this mean? It means nothing more nor less than that the universe is in favour of the keeping of its own laws; and the keeping of the laws of the universe means perfect rightness in every direction, and up in the realm of ethics perfect righteousness. The universe, then, is a righteous universe; for, if all the laws of the universe could be perfectly kept, the result would be perfect in every department of life,—in the lower world around us, in the human world, in the individual,—and man would be perfect in body, perfect in mind, perfect in heart, perfect in his æsthetic nature, perfect as grouped into society, perfect as engaged in business, perfect as manifested in forms of government. It would be a perfect world if the laws of God were only kept perfectly. This means that the power that is manifested in the universe is a righteous power.

Take another step. Righteousness has about it something hard and unfeeling. It is law; it is obedience to law. It may not have much feeling about it, much intention of goodness. I believe we are justified in going a step farther, and saying that not only is the power manifested in this universe a righteous power, but a good power, good in our human

sense of goodness. Let me offer one or two suggestions on this point. The mere fact that society exists is scientific demonstration that the power manifested in the universe is a good power. Why? Those forces that keep men and women together in society, the cohesive forces, the centripetal forces, are forces of sympathy and helpfulness,—forces that we speak of as good. The forces that tend to disintegrate, to disrupt, to separate and destroy society, are forces of antagonism and hate, bad forces,—what we call evil. Therefore, the mere fact that society exists proves that the good is in the majority, to say the least, or it would not exist. The simple fact that from the far-away beginning we can note that there has been at least slow improvement, century by century, age by age, is still further demonstration that this power is in the majority. It gives us a sure confidence that this power by and by will win, will control and shape the destinies of the race. Not a poet has sung, not a seer has seen in vision, not a prophet has foretold, anything high and sweet and fine which is not purely rational in the light of the history of the race.

It is a good power, then, which is at work in this universe. You can emphasise this

position, if you wish, by recurring to the point I just made in regard to righteousness ; for it means as much here as it did there. God is in favour, and in the nature of the case *must be* in favour, of keeping His own laws ; and the keeping of His own laws results in goodness, in what we in the human sense of that word mean by goodness. The power, then, manifested in the universe is a good power.

I take another step. I believe that it is a conscious power, not a blind force. Consider for a moment : a power that is one, a power that is orderly, a power that is intelligent, a power that is following certain definite lines toward certain definite ends so as to force upon us the conviction that it is a purposing power, a power that is righteous, that is good, must also be a power that is conscious. All these other qualities presuppose consciousness, and force us to think of it as a rational necessity. Consciousness exists as a quality of the highest being that we know of in the range of humanity,—not only consciousness, but *self*-consciousness. Animals are conscious : only man, so far as the inhabitants of this world are concerned, is self-conscious. Self-consciousness, then, the ability to think and say “I,”—this exists as the highest manifestation

so far of the evolution of this visible universe around us. Whatever is manifested must exist in that which manifests. Or, to put it another way, that which manifests must at least be equal to whatever is manifested. God, then, this Power, if not conscious in the sense in which we use it of ourselves, is at least as high, as much, as comprehensive, as consciousness. In other words, He is not *less* than conscious. If there is something in His consciousness different from ours, it means that He is more than conscious.

This leads to the next step. This power is personal. A good many people, not thinking quite what it implies, are apt to suppose that they are accepting the results of modern knowledge when they say that the infinite cannot be personal. I am told every little while: "I believe in God, but not in a personal God." It is a personal God or no God. The word "God" has no meaning if you leave out person. What does personality imply? Not what we mean necessarily when we speak of each other as persons. It does not mean that God is an outlined being, located somewhere, and that He is limited. The essential thing in personality is consciousness; a being who can say "I," think "I," is a person. In that sense

I believe that God is not only conscious, but personal. Here we can say of personality just what we have been saying of consciousness. If God is not personal, in the ordinary sense of that word as we use it of each other, then certainly He is not something *less*; he is something unspeakably and infinitely more, something that includes that while it transcends it.

In a conversation with Herbert Spencer one day he said to me one or two things which at that time were not published; they may have been since. He said that, while we may not think of the Power manifested in the universe as conscious and personal in the sense in which we are, we have a right to suppose that it is something as much above and beyond what we mean by personality and consciousness as these are above and beyond vegetable growths.

Conscious, personal, our Father. Stop and think a moment. That Power that is not ourselves which has produced us is, of course, our Father. If it is mere matter, still it is our Father; if it is dirt, it is our Father; if it is force, it is our Father. *Whatever* you find the nature of this universe around us to be, still it is our Father. I believe that it is order,

intelligence, purpose, righteousness, goodness, consciousness, personality, and Father. Father includes all these. Then what?

We must remember that our highest and finest thoughts must fall infinitely short of the reality. Wise was the old writer who said: "For, as the heavens are high above the earth, so are my thoughts higher than your thoughts, and my ways than your ways." We cannot expect to comprehend the infinite. Think a moment. If we could comprehend God, it would mean that He would be annihilated. He would be no God that a finite being could completely comprehend. Fortunate for us, then, is it that God *does* move in a mysterious way, and that we are wrapped in a cloud, and that His face is oftentimes hid from us. Were He not infinite, we could not believe in Him or trust in Him.

What, then, shall we talk about being anthropomorphic and try not to be? There are a great many persons who stumble over this word "anthropomorphic." What would they have? We are *anthropoi*,—we are men. We must think as men, feel as men, reason as men. The world has advanced in its ability to think and feel and reason. We have taken wonderful steps beyond the far-away beginning. We

have higher and finer thoughts about God than our ancestors had ; but we cannot *escape ourselves*. To try not to be anthropomorphic is to try to be something less than that and something poorer. If we cease to think as men, and if we cannot think as something more than men, it must be in terms that are less and lower than man. Let us not be afraid of anthropomorphism ; only let us always bear in mind that our human thoughts are infinitely and unspeakably below the reality, that God is something not less, but something more than we can imagine, something higher and something better.

And now let us think for a little while of God as our Father, with the question perpetually in mind as to what you would have Him do different from what He has been doing and is doing, if you could have your way. If we take our imaginations and our fancies and look them squarely in the face, we shall find that most of them are unreasonable. What would we have God do different from what He is doing, if we could have our way ?

Perhaps the first thing that some one would say is that he would like to have a revelation of Him that is perfectly clear and indubitable. But we have one. Only we have not been

able to read more than a few sentences of it. There is an infallible revelation of God in His universe, written on every atom of it, manifested in all its laws. The kind of revelations the people have imagined in the past have failed them, every one. A book revelation, in the nature of things, cannot possibly be infallible. We have one that our fathers thought was infallible. Has it ever proved an infallible guide? People read it differently, have quarrelled over its texts, have misunderstood its significance in every direction. It has not been an infallible guide to anybody, even to those who so regarded it. They have been separated into factions, quarrelling with each other, imprisoning each other, burning each other at the stake. It has not been an infallible guide, then. In the nature of the case it is impossible to put infallibility into words. The Constitution of the United States is as bald and bare a statement of facts and principles as you can frame; and yet political parties have always been fighting over its interpretation. Language changes. What a book means to one age it does not mean to the next age. It would have to be in some one language,—this infallible book,—and that would have to be translated; and, then, you would have to

have an infallible translation and infallible interpreters. God could not reveal Himself infallibly in that way.

Suppose He sent a prophet, some one to speak for Him ; how could he prove himself to be from God ? Thousands of people have come, and claimed to be His messengers. Why should we believe this one ? If a man came to-day and walked the streets, and told us that he was a messenger from God, the chances are that we should shut him up in an asylum, and that we should be right in doing so. How could he prove himself an infallible messenger from God ? He could only say so. Perhaps he could claim to work miracles. Should we believe him ? If he did work miracles and do what no man could do, if he were capable of abrogating one or any of God's laws, if he came to contradict what God is accustomed to do, contradict His method of working, would that prove that he was from God ?

Suppose God should write across the sky, "I am God," who would believe that ? It would be open to every one to say that it just happened so. The configuration would be no more remarkable than the constellations that we see everywhere. And, then, it would only be in one language, and it would have to be

translated ; and you could always doubt the translation, and it would mean nothing as to the character or love or care and kindness of God.

Look at it in any way you will, and I believe you will be compelled to come rationally to the conclusion that God *has* revealed Himself and *is* revealing Himself to us in the clearest and best of all possible ways.

Look at it in another aspect. We can go to our human fathers and see them, and sit down by them and present our requests, and reason with them and beg them to do such and such things. We cannot go to God in that sense. We cannot find some spot in the universe where, as the author of the Book of Job wished, he might come to the foot of God's seat. We cannot talk with Him, and expect Him to answer our questions as a human father might. This implication that we might and ought to is in the minds of millions of intelligent people to-day. If God was located somewhere, and we could go to Him and have fifteen minutes to talk over things, what would that mean ? It would take millions and millions of years for us to get our turn.

And, then, what do we expect from our prayers different from what we get ? Do you

suppose that the All-Father is going to be partial? Would you like to believe that He will help this one and not that one, listening to a prayer of a heart-broken mother here and letting thousands of mothers suffer elsewhere? Would you like to believe that of Him? I should have no respect for Him if I thought He would do a special thing for me that He would not do for a million of His children. Suppose you tell Him that you have a ship sailing east, and you want the wind to blow favourable for its voyage; but another of his children has a ship sailing west, and another north, and another south. What will He do about it? Will He interfere with the regular order of His winds, or will He let us study them out and see how we can adapt ourselves to His changeless, wise, and blessed laws? God hears and answers prayer, I believe. He is nearer to us than the breath we breathe. Every wish, every unuttered desire, finds echo in His infinite heart, in His tender care. But Jesus told us wisely a good many years ago that the most blessed prayer we could utter is, "Thy will be done." The wisest thing is to find out God's methods and ways, and adapt ourselves to them.

Turn to another consideration. Would you,

if you could, have God interfere all the time to prevent you from suffering when you have broken His laws in the physical world? I have considered that matter already at length. It would be the destruction of the universe if we could have our little, petty, selfish way in regard to matters like this.

Would you have Him, if you could, save you from suffering when you have done wrong, moral wrong? If God was unkind enough to take that attitude towards you, it would be your immediate and eternal destruction. God is kind towards you in making every wrong road hard, and in leaving open only the one on which shines the light that grows more and more towards the dawning of His eternal day. God was never so kind as when He made this universe an impracticable and ultimately impossible place for moral wrong, because that means that sometime and somewhere we shall be *driven* into the right, driven to His feet, driven to His arms, driven to the development in us of that which is highest and finest and most godlike and best.

Think it over, then, carefully. What would you have God do, if He was your Father in heaven, different from what He has been doing

and is doing now? I confess frankly, that after years of careful study I do not know one single thing in this direction that I would dare to change if I could do it with a turn of my hand. I would not venture to interfere with the working of this infinite and eternal Power that I believe to be all-wise, all-loving, all-tender, all-fatherly, all-motherly. For what has He done?

He has placed us here on this earth in His great universe. We are surrounded on every hand by His presence. He is working in us, through us, above us, and below us, and all around us. "In Him we live and move and have our being." "Closer is He than breathing, and nearer than hands and feet," as Tennyson says. These forces are working perpetually according to wise, eternal, changeless laws. God is manifesting Himself, His power, His wisdom, His love, through every movement in the universe.

Here we are, then. We have a solid place on which to stand—solid enough so that we can feel something real under our feet. We have light enough so that we can see to take the next step ahead. There is no man or woman in the world to-day who is really doubtful in his or her mind as to that which is right

to think and feel and say and do. We have a part here in this world to work out for ourselves, an opportunity for character. We could not work out and develop our characters if we were interfered with all the time. We can do it best in just the kind of world in which we are. We have motives and incentives enough on every hand. We have the light of the immortal hope leading us on. I believe that this light of hope is growing into a certainty. That means that there is to be opportunity, scope, and range somewhere for every soul to come to everything of which it is capable. Could you ask a father to do anything more, anything better than that for every one of his children?

I believe that God is all that we could possibly put into words of tenderness and goodness. He is not only Father; He is Mother. All the sympathy, all the pity, all the willingness to help, all the loving-kindness that you find manifested in any human heart or life, is only a partial shadowing forth of that which is infinite in Him. Where did the mother-heart come from but from the mother-heart in Him? Where did the father-heart come from but from the father-heart in Him? Where did any of these fine and high and sweet things come

from but from Him? I believe that God suffers. It is not part of the infinite and divine blessedness to be insensitive to the pain of His children. "The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now," says the apostle; and I believe that that includes our Father in scope and range, only His suffering is not hopeless, like ours. A mother sits with a little child playing at her feet, and the child bursts out in an anguish of tears because she has broken her doll; and the mother takes her up in her arms and comforts her. She suffers, but not as the child suffers; for she knows that it is a petty thing, and that it lasts but a little while, and that she can have another doll, and that she will even outgrow the time when she cares for dolls at all, and will love something higher and better in their place. So God can fold to His infinite and tender heart all the sufferings and sorrows of His children in all the worlds, and yet see the light and the hope and the joy and the glory that close them all round, and into which they are to issue by and by. We are like little children who wake up out of a bad dream in the night, and cry in terror, or in the shadows see distorted images of familiar things until we are afraid; but, as the mother hovers close by

and waits to comfort and soothe, so I believe that God hovers over the cradle of every one of His undeveloped children, and that, by and by, when the dawn rises, we shall see and understand.

So, blinking none of the facts, disregarding no ugly reality, looking all the dark problems fairly in the face, I believe we are rationally justified in saying, "Our Father in heaven; our Father on earth; our Father in hell; our Father here and everywhere and always." "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth," not alone "them that fear Him," —I think we can be wiser than the old writer, —He pitieth all His creatures that can think or feel.

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